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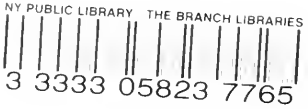

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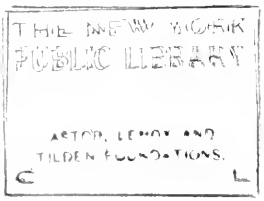
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DAVID SINGING BEFORE SAUL

Stories from the Old Testament

FOR CHILDREN

BY

HARRIET S. BLAINE BEALE

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Stories from the Old Testament for Children

CHAPTER I

ABRAHAM AND LOT

The people of whom I am to tell you, if you will listen, dear children, lived a long time ago, when the world was very different from what it is now. There were no railroads or steamboats, there were no telegraphs or telephones, there were only a few good roads, and a journey was a very serious undertaking.

And the geography of the world at that time was all topsy-turvy, according to our way of thinking. Nowadays, we live in America and England and France and Germany; and Asia and Africa we think of only in our lessons, or when we plan hunts for tigers and elephants, or expeditions to make our fortunes. But in the days of our stories, Germany and France and England and America were just great forests, with the wild beasts running through them, and all the cities and shops and schools were over in Asia and Africa.

The inhabitants of those countries did not know anything about the Pacific Ocean or the Atlantic Ocean; but they sailed away on the Mediterranean, which was their Great Sea, and their bravest men were quite content with the adventures they could find along its shores.

Even the names of the people who made the great

nations then have faded away, they lived so long ago; and you probably would not know whom I meant if I talked about the Assyrians and Chaldeans and Egyptians and Medes. But there were Chinamen in those days, just as there are now, and I dare say they were just as queer as the ones we know.

And, strangely enough, though the world was so young then, people were crowded in the great cities, just as they are now; and young men went away from their fathers' homes and pushed out into the world to make their fortunes, as our own fathers did, and as we see our brothers do every day.

It is of one of these young men that I wish to tell you first. His name was Abraham. But, in order to understand his story, you must know something about the people who governed the earth when he was born. There were the Egyptians, who lived on the River Nile, and built the pyramids. And there were the Assyrians or Chaldeans, who lived on the River Tigris and the River Euphrates, and knew a great deal about the stars. These were the two chief empires of the world (China kept away, far over in her own corner), and they were always fighting one another. Then there were the Phœnicians, who were the sailors and traders of the world. They lived in a few great cities along the coast of the Mediterranean, and sailed about in their ships, and carried all the news from one country to another, besides bringing precious things back and forth. And, after these, there were all the other small nations, who were not Assyrian or Egyptian, and who only wanted to keep out of their big stupid quarrels. If you will remember these few names, and look on a map to see where the Nile and the Tigris and Euphrates are, you will find no trouble in following the many wanderings of our chosen people. Now we will go back to Abraham.

As I said, he was a young man, and he lived near the Tigris, in a city called Ur of the Chaldees. He had a father called Terah, and a brother Nahor, and he was married to a very beautiful woman whose name was Sarah, and he had a nephew called Lot, who lived with Abraham, because his own father was dead. Now, these people were rich enough and happy enough, but they grew tired of living in Ur of the Chaldees, and they all moved to another city called Haran, far to the north of Ur. Moving meant a great deal in those days, because, if a man were rich, he could not carry his money in a bag, but had to move his wealth with him,—that is, all his flocks and tents and bondsmen or slaves; and in going from one country to another, they could not always follow a straight road, but were obliged to go where the sheep could find grass to eat. So that, when Abraham and his family reached Haran, and found themselves in a beautiful, fertile country, they were glad to rest there for years. Besides, Terah was an old man, and I think he grew tired of wandering about. Whatever may have been the reason, Abraham lived in Haran until his father died, and then grew restless again, and made up his mind to go to Egypt. But only he and Sarah and Lot started this time, for old Terah was dead, and brother Nahor and his wife, Milcah, liked Haran so much that they decided to live there the rest of their lives. So they started towards Egypt.

On their way Abraham and his party went through the land of Canaan, and it was then that Abraham thought that God came to him in a dream and told him that some day he and his children would have that country for their own, but, though impressed by his dream, he continued on his journey, and at last arrived in Egypt, where he was glad to rest and make a long, long visit. And in Egypt, King Pharaoh and his people were very kind to him, for

the sake of his beautiful wife, Sarah, and through their generosity, when he left Egypt, he had sheep and oxen and he-asses and men-servants and maid-servants and she-asses and camels, and was very rich in cattle and silver and gold. And Abraham remembered his dream, and went back to Canaan.

Now, Lot was still with him, but he had grown to be a man by this time, and he owned almost as many flocks and herds as his uncle, and his herdmen (the men who took care of the animals) and Abraham's herdmen began to quarrel, because there was never grass enough in any one place to feed such an army of beasts. And Abraham was very wise, and saw that they must separate. So he called Lot to him, and said:

"Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we are brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me. If thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or, if thou take the right hand, then I will go to the left."

Then Lot looked all about him—"lifted up his eyes," is the old way of saying it—and he chose the plain of the River Jordan to live in, because there were streams there where his cattle could drink, and because it reminded him of the land of Egypt. And he moved his tent to the east, to the city of Sodom, while Abraham dwelled in the land of Canaan, by the oaks of Mamre, where he built an altar to God. You see, nowadays people going to a new country, as soon as they can, build a church, but in the beautiful time in which Abraham lived no one lingered under a roof longer than was absolutely necessary. Men slept in tents, it is true, but all day they were out-of-doors, so, instead of building a church in which to worship God, Abraham put up just an altar for the people to gather around, and they

said their prayers and sang their hymns under the open sky.

Now, although Abraham and Lot had to live apart, they always loved each other, and once, when Lot got into trouble and was carried away by the king of some little country near Sodom, Abraham took "his trained men, born in his house, three hundred and eighteen," and went after him. There was a great fight, and Abraham won, of course, and he brought back all the goods this king had stolen, and his nephew Lot and the women of his house, and the people of Lot's country were so impressed by Abraham's wisdom and courage that the King of Sodom, where Lot lived, wanted to give him the tenth part of all he owned. But Abraham would not take any present; he accepted "only that which the young men had eaten when they came back hungry from the fight."

It was on the way home from this fight that Abraham met a great person, called Melchizedeck, King of Salem, Prince of God Most High. He brought forth bread and wine, and blessed Abraham; but I only tell you about him now because you will hear more of him when you grow up, and I want you to know his name.

This was not the only time Abraham helped Lot, as you will see. Meanwhile, they both continued to live very happily, Abraham at Hebron, and Lot in Sodom, and Abraham's one trouble was that he had no children. He was growing to be an old man now, and he and Sarah were often lonely, so much so that Sarah suggested to Abraham that he should adopt the child of one of her serving-women as his own son. He agreed, and chose the boy of a woman called Hagar, but poor Sarah found that she could not feel toward Hagar's child as though he were her own, and when she saw Abraham becoming fond of little Ishmael she grew very jealous, and once even went so far as to drive

Hagar away from Hebron into the desert, where the poor woman would have starved if the Angel of the Lord had not appeared to her at a fountain in the wilderness and told her to go back and "submit herself under the hands of her mistress." Sarah allowed her to take her place again as one of the household, but they were not a happy family, I am afraid.

So things went on until a wonderful thing happened. It came about that once while Abraham was sitting in his tent door, in the heat of the day, under the oaks of Mamre, he suddenly lifted up his eyes and saw three men standing before him. I do not know how he knew at once that they were angels or messengers of the Lord. Perhaps there was a light around their heads, or perhaps, and I think this is more likely, Abraham was such a good man himself that he could not help knowing when a good angel was near him. However that is, the moment he saw these three men he jumped up and ran to meet them from the tent-door, and bowed himself to earth, and said to the chief one:

"My Lord, if now I have found favor in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant: let now a little water be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree: and I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts."

And they said:

"So do, as thou hast said."

And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said:

"Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes."

And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetched a calf tender and good, and gave it unto the servant, and he hastened to dress it. And he took butter and milk and the

calf which he had dressed and set it before them: and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat. And they said unto him:

"Where is Sarah, thy wife?"

And he said:

"Behold, in the tent."

And he (the chief angel) said:

"I will certainly return unto thee when the season reviveth" (that meant, in the spring-time); "and lo, Sarah, thy wife, shall have a son."

Now, Sarah was standing just inside the tent-door, and when she heard this she burst out laughing, for *she* did not know the men were angels, and she had wanted a child for so many years that her poor heart had grown bitter with waiting, and she could not believe in such happiness ever coming to her. And the chief angel said suddenly, although Sarah thought he had not seen her:

"Wherefore did Sarah laugh? . . . . . Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the set time I will return unto thee, when the season reviveth, and Sarah shall have a son."

Then Sarah was frightened, and stammered out:

"I laughed not."

And the angel said:

"Nay, but thou didst laugh;" and then he and the other two men rose up and looked towards Sodom, where Lot lived. And when Abraham saw where the angels were going, he offered to show them the road, and walked a little way with them, and as they went they told him that they were going on a fearful errand. It seems Sodom and another city near it, Gomorrah, were so wicked and so noted for their sins that God had determined to destroy them, and he had sent these three messengers of his to bring down fire and brimstone upon them.

You can think how Abraham felt when he heard that,

knowing that Sodom was where his dear Lot lived. Of course, he could not stop the angels, but he went back and prayed and prayed. And presently he had one of his dreams, and thought that he was standing before God, and that he said to God:

"Wilt thou consume the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city, wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein?"

And he thought that God answered and said:

"If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sake."

Then Abraham pleaded more boldly, and said:

"Behold now I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes, peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt thou destroy the city for lack of five?"

And he said:

"I will not destroy it if I find there forty and five."

And Abraham spake unto him yet again, and said:

"Peradventure there shall be forty found there?"

And he said:

"I will not do it for forty's sake."

And he said:

"Oh, let not the Lord be angry and I will speak: peradventure there shall be thirty found there?"

And he said:

"I will not do it if I find thirty there."

And he said:

"Behold, now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord: peradventure there shall be twenty found there?"

And he said:

"I will not destroy it for the twenty's sake."

And he said:

"Oh, let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: peradventure ten shall be found there?"

And he said:

"I will not destroy it for the ten's sake."

And then Abraham did not dare ask any more.

Meanwhile the angels came to Sodom just at evening, and Lot sat in the gate of the city, and when he saw them coming he rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face to the earth, and he said:

"Behold now, my Lords, turn aside, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early and go on your way."

For Lot knew that the men of Sodom were very wicked, and he was afraid they would hurt these strangers if they should find them on the street. At first the angels said:

"Nay, but we will abide in the street all night;" but Lot urged them greatly, and at last they went home with him. And he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread for them. And in the night the people of the city came and threatened Lot to break down his house if he tried to keep the strangers safe there; but Lot was brave, and when the wicked men really tried to break in the angels smote them all with blindness, "so that they wearied themselves to find the door."

Now, the angels saw that Lot was a good man, though he did live in Sodom, so they said to him:

"Hast thou any here besides?" meaning any relations. "Sons-in-law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whomsoever thou hast in the city; bring them out of the place: for we will destroy this place. . . . . The Lord hath sent us to destroy it."

Lot apparently had no sons, but he went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were to marry his daughters, and said:

"Up, get you out of this place; for the Lord will destroy the city."

But his sons-in-law thought that he was trying to frighten them, and they would not listen to him. And when the morning came the angels gave him no more time to plead with them, for they hastened Lot, saying:

"Arise, take thy wife and thy two daughters which are here; lest thou be consumed in the punishment of this city."

Still Lot lingered, I suppose still hoping to save some of his friends, until the angel laid hold upon his hand and upon the hand of his wife and upon the hand of his two daughters, the Lord being merciful unto him; and they brought him forth and set him without the city. And when they had brought them forth they said to him:

"Escape for thy life, look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain lest thou be consumed."

And Lot, looking up, thought he could never reach the mountain, and he said:

"Oh, not so, my Lord. I cannot escape to the mountain, lest evil overtake me and I die. Behold now this city (naming one) is near to flee unto, and it is a little one. Oh, let me escape thither (is it not a little one?), and my soul shall live."

I suppose poor Lot thought a little city could not be as bad as a big one. Whether the angel thought so, too, I cannot say, but he promised to spare the little city, and he told Lot to haste and escape there, for that he could not do anything until he was safe. And from that time this city was called Zoar, which means *little*. Lot reached there just at sunrise, and as soon as he passed inside its gates there came a terrible rain of fire and brimstone upon the cities of the Plain, Sodom and Gomorrah and all the others —only little Zoar was spared.

Now the angel had told Lot and his family that they must not look back, because he knew that what they would see would be too terrible for mortal eyes to bear; but when this dreadful storm began Lot's wife felt she *must* see what was happening, so she stopped behind Lot and looked back over her shoulder. And all in one moment she was changed, and grew white and hard and crumbly, and became just a pillar of salt; and Lot and his daughters had to go away and leave her standing there, forever and ever looking back over her shoulder.

And we are told how Abraham got up early in the morning, and looked over all the plain toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and he could only see a great heavy cloud of smoke going up from there like the smoke of a furnace.

CHAPTER II

ISAAC

Now, when the spring-time was come it happened as the angel had said, and Sarah became the mother of a little boy. And she was so happy that she said, remembering the angel's visit:

"God hath made me to laugh: every one that heareth will laugh with me."

And she named her child Isaac.

But now Sarah disliked poor little Ishmael more than ever. And she could not bear to see him and his mother about the tents. She wanted Abraham to care only for her boy Isaac.

"Wherefore," she said to Abraham, "cast out this bondswoman and her son, for the son of this bondswoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac."

And Abraham was troubled and did not know what to do, for he wanted to please Sarah, and yet he loved Ishmael dearly. While he was hesitating, God came to him in a dream, and told him not to grieve for Ishmael, but to send him away with his mother as Sarah wanted, for that He would take care of them.

So "Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away, and she departed and wandered in the wilderness of Beer-sheba."

Poor Hagar! *She* had not any dream, and she thought that she and her boy had been sent away to die in this

wilderness. But there was nowhere else to go, so she walked on and on until the bread was all eaten and the water gone, too, and she saw nothing before her but to die of thirst. She could not bear to hear her child cry, so "she cast him under one of the shrubs," out of the hot sun, "and she went and sat her down over against him a good way off, as it were a bow-shot, for she said:

"'Let me not look upon the death of the child.'

"And she sat over against him, and lift up her voice, and wept."

But God was taking care of her, you may be sure, and as she sat there with the sun beating down on her head and her throat parched with thirst, and her baby's wail sounding in her ears, which she could not shut out, even if she did go a bow-shot away, suddenly she heard the voice of the angel of God calling to her out of Heaven. And he said:

"What aileth thee, Hagar? Fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hands; for I will make of him a great nation."

"And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went and filled the bottle with water and gave the lad to drink." I hope she took some herself, too, but it was of little Ishmael she thought first, and very happy she must have been when she ran to him with the cool water and saw him drink deeply and stop crying at last.

After this she put her trust in God, and she and her boy continued to live in the wilderness for many years, and when Ishmael grew up he became an archer—that is, a man who hunts with bows and arrows. And in time he married a woman from the land of Egypt, and his children became a great nation, as God had promised.

Meanwhile Isaac, too, was growing up into a strong young lad, and he was the joy of Abraham's life. "And it came

to pass after these things that God did prove Abraham,"—that is, God put Abraham to a test or trial to see whether he would really trust and obey Him to the uttermost. He said unto him one day:

"Abraham!"

And Abraham answered promptly:

"Here am I!"

And God said:

"Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, even Isaac, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."

Abraham's heart must have stood still when he heard these dreadful words, for a burnt offering was an old way of worshiping God, by taking some animal, generally a sheep or goat, and burning it upon an altar, for in those days people thought that God was pleased if they gave him of what they valued most and that the only way to offer a gift to Him was to burn it and let the smoke and flame ascend towards Heaven. And here was Abraham being told to sacrifice his own child. Still, it was God who spoke to him, and God was Abraham's friend, whom he trusted, so he rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he clave (or chopped) the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up and went unto the place of which God had told him.

It was a long journey, but I think it must have seemed all too short to that poor father when on the third day he lifted up his eyes and saw the place afar off. Then Abraham said unto his young men:

"Abide ye here with the ass, and I and the lad will go yonder; and we will worship and come again to you."

And he took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it

on Isaac his son; and he took in his hand the fire and the knife; and they went both of them together.

Isaac started very cheerfully, for Abraham had not had the heart to tell him of what he was going to do; but as they climbed the mountain and he saw his father's solemnity and tenderness, he became frightened of he knew not what, and at last he said:

"My father!"

And Abraham said:

"Here am I, my son."

And Isaac said:

"Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?"

And Abraham said.

"God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son," for still he could not believe that it was his boy who was to be sacrificed. So they went both of them together, and they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built the altar there, and laid the wood in order, and then he waited, hoping to hear God's voice again, but all around was silence. Then he turned to his little son, who dared not ask a question even, and he bound him and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. And then again he waited, and still there was no sign from God; and Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And then at last through the clear air rang out a voice, the voice of God's angel calling to him out of Heaven:

"Abraham! Abraham!"

And Abraham said, all trembling with hope and fear this time:

"Here am I."

And the blessed angel said:

"Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any

thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest (or lovest) God, seeing that thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from Him."

And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and beheld behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. . . . . And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said:

"Because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, the Lord will bless thee and make thy descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore, and in thy children shall all the nations of the world be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice."

So Abraham returned unto his young men, and they rose up and went back together to Beersheba, where Abraham was then living.

We are not told any more about Isaac's childhood, but I suppose he grew up wisely and peacefully under his father's care. Just as he ceased to be a boy his mother Sarah died, in the land of Canaan. And Abraham wept for her, and we are told that he rose up from before his dead, and went to the country people about there, who were called the children of Heth, and asked them for a place to bury Sarah.

"I am a stranger and a sojourner with you," he said, "give me a possession of a burying-place with you."

And the children of Heth, who had learned to love and respect Abraham, as did all who knew him, were glad of the chance of doing him a kindness.

"Hear us, my Lord," they answered, "thou art a mighty prince among us: in the choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead; none of us shall withhold from thee his sepulchre."

Then Abraham thanked the people, and asked for the

cave of Machpelah, which lay in the end of a field belonging to a young man called Ephron, saying:

"For the full price let him give it to me in the midst of you."

But the young man would not sell his land. He spoke up before all the people, saying:

"Nay, my lord, hear me: the field I *give* thee, and the cave that is therein, I give it thee; bury thy dead."

Then Abraham thanked him warmly, but still he would not take the land without paying for it, and at last Ephron had to give in, saying sadly:

"My lord, hearken unto me! A piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver, what is it between thee and me? Bury therefore thy dead."

So Abraham weighed to Ephron the silver which he had named in the audience of the children of Heth, and took possession of the field of Machpelah, which was by his old home of Hebron; and there, under the beautiful oaks of Mamre, was Sarah buried.

And now that she was gone Abraham felt that he was an old man, and would soon have to go and leave Isaac alone, and he grew anxious as to what his boy would do. And he had a great desire to see Isaac happily married before his own time should come to die. But he did not want him to choose a wife from any of the daughters of Canaan, among whom they dwelt. No one of them seemed fair or good enough for his son. So he sent for his most trusted servant, the elder of his house that ruled over all that he had, and gave him his instructions. First he made the man promise solemnly that Isaac should never marry any of the women of that part of the country, and then he told him that he must go back to Haran into his, Abraham's, country and to his kindred, and take a wife for him. The servant thought of the difficulties in the way, and said:

"Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me into this land: must I needs bring thy son again unto the land whence thou camest?"

But Abraham could not let Isaac go so far away from him. No, he said to the servant, God would probably send one of his angels to show him what to do, and if indeed the woman would not come to Isaac, when he had found her, then the elder should be freed from his promise, and Isaac might marry a Canaanite woman.

So the man took ten camels of the camels of his master, and departed, having all goodly things of his master's in his hand, and he arose and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor, that is, to Haran, where Abraham's father had died, and where he had left his brother.

It was a long journey, and the servant had much time on his way to decide what he should do. And when he came to the city he made the camels to kneel down . . . . . by the well of water at the time of evening, the time that women go out to draw water. For in these days one well might provide all the people of the city with water. They had no pipes to bring it into the houses, and in the evening, when it was cool, the women would come to the well and draw enough water to last through the twenty-four hours. The water was kept standing in the houses in great stone jars; and you would see the mistress of a house coming to fill them at the head of all her maidens, each with a pitcher on her head. Of course, Abraham's servant knew this custom well, and he prayed to God, saying:

"O Lord, the God of my master Abraham, send me, I pray thee, good speed this day, and show kindness unto my master Abraham. Behold I stand by the fountain of water, and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water; and let it come to pass that the damsel to whom I shall say, 'Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that

I may drink,' and she shall say, 'Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also;' let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac, and thereby shall I know that thou hast showed kindness unto my master."

And it came to pass before he had done speaking that, behold, Rebekah came out . . . . . with her pitcher upon her shoulder. Now, Rebekah, strangely enough, was the granddaughter of Abraham's brother Nahor, and her father's name was Bethuel. And the damsel was very fair to look upon . . . . , and she went down to the fountain and filled her pitcher, and came up, and the servant ran to meet her, and said:

"Give me to drink, I pray thee, a little water of thy pitcher."

And she said:

"Drink, my lord."

And she hasted and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink. And when she had done giving him drink, she said:

"I will draw for thy camels also, until they have done drinking."

And she hasted and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again unto the well to draw, and drew for all his camels. And the man looked steadfastly on her, holding his peace, to know whether the Lord had made his journey prosperous or not. And it came to pass, as the camels had done drinking, that the man took a golden ring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands of ten shekels weight of gold, and said:

"Whose daughter art thou? Tell me, I pray thee. Is there room in thy father's house for us to lodge in?"

And she said unto him:

"I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Nahor. . . .

We have both straw and provender enough, and room to lodge in."

And the man bowed his head, and worshiped the Lord. And he said:

"Blessed be the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who hath not forsaken his mercy nor his truth toward my master. As for me, the Lord hath led me in the way to the house of my master's brethren."

Then Rebekah ran to tell her mother of this man she had met, and to show her ring and bracelets; and when Rebekah's brother Laban heard all she said and saw the jewels, he hurried himself to the fountain, and said to Abraham's servant, who was still standing by the camels:

"Come in, thou blessed of the Lord. Wherefore standest thou without? for I have prepared the house, and room for the camels."

So the man gladly went with Laban; and Laban ungirded the camels, and he gave straw and provender for the camels, and water to wash his feet and the feet of the men that were with him. And there was set meat before him to eat. But he said:

"I will not rest until I have told my errand."

And Laban bade him:

"Speak on."

Then said he:

"I am Abraham's servant. And the Lord hath blessed my master greatly, and he is become great: and He hath given him flocks and herds and silver and gold, and man-servants and maid-servants and camels and asses. And Sarah, my master's wife, bare a son when she was old, and unto him hath he given all that he hath." And he went on to tell them of Abraham's instruction to him and of his long journey to Haran, and of his doubt as to how he should find his master's relatives, and of his

providential meeting with Rebekah at the well, and ended with a formal request for the hand of Rebekah, saying:

"And now, if ye will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me; and if not, tell me; that I may turn to the right hand or to the left."

Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said:

"The thing proceedeth from the Lord, we cannot speak unto thee, bad or good;" meaning that God had so clearly shown His will in this matter that they could only obey Him.

"Behold, Rebekah is before thee," said they, "take her and go, and let her be thy master's son's wife, as the Lord hath spoken."

"And it came to pass, that when Abraham's servant heard their words he bowed himself down to the earth unto the Lord. And the servant brought forth jewels of silver and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebekah: he gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things. And they did eat and drink, he and the men that were with him, and tarried all night."

But when morning came he was anxious to start back at once to Abraham.

"Send me away unto my master," said he, earnestly. But Rebekah's mother and brother were not prepared for so sudden a departure. To lose their child was bad enough, but they had not counted on having her leave them at once. So they begged the elder, saying:

"Let the damsel abide with us a few days, at the least ten; and after that she shall go."

And he said unto them:

"Hinder me not, seeing the Lord hath prospered my way; send me away that I may go to my master."

And they said:

"We will call the damsel and inquire at her mouth,"

hoping that Rebekah would say she could not possibly leave so soon. But when Rebekah came, and her mother asked her:

"Wilt thou go with this man?" she answered very readily:

"I will go."

She was all eagerness to set forth on her journey, and her mother and brother had nothing more to say. They could only send her old nurse with her, and bless her and bid her God-speed, sadly enough, for the distance she was going was so far that they could hardly hope ever to see her again.

"Our sister," they prayed, "be thou the mother of thousands and ten thousands, and let thy seed possess the gate of those which hate them," which meant that they hoped she might have many children to make her happy and that they might triumph over their enemies.

And Rebekah arose, and her damsels, and they rode upon the camels and followed the man; and the servant took Rebekah and went his way. I am glad to think she did not go off quite alone to a strange country, but had her nurse and her damsels with her; are not you?

Now Isaac, who had been left behind all this time, must have thought a great deal about the elder's mission, and wondered much as to what kind of a wife he would bring him, or whether he would bring him any wife at all. Every evening, when he was free to do as he liked after the day's labor, he went out to meditate in the field; and one night as he was walking there, he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and behold, there were camels coming.

Of course, it was the servant returning with Rebekah, and when *she* lifted up her eyes, she saw Isaac, and she lighted off her camel.

And she said unto the servant (although I think she guessed already):

"What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us?"

And the servant said:

"It is my master."

And she took a veil and covered herself. Then Isaac drew near, and the servant told him all the things that he had done, who Rebekah was, and how he had found her. And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and she became his wife, and he loved her; and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

CHAPTER III

JACOB AND ESAU

Now, soon after this Abraham died, in a good old age, an old man, and full of years. And Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, with Sarah his wife.

And the next thing we are told is of the birth of Isaac's twin sons. The first was red when he was born, "all over like a hairy garment," and they gave him the name of Esau, which means red. The other they called Jacob.

"And the boys grew: and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain (or quiet) man, dwelling in tents." Jacob, you see, was more like his father and grandfather, while Esau was wild and liked a free, roaming life. "Now, Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison, and Rebekah loved Jacob," I suppose because he gave her no anxiety. Esau had a jolly life as long as there was plenty to hunt and kill, but sometimes when he could find no game he would have to come to his plodding brother Jacob to get enough to eat. Jacob "sodded pottage," that is, he was a farmer. So it happened that one day Esau had bad luck, and could find nothing in all the country to bring down with his bow and arrow, "and he came in from the field, and he was faint" for want of food, and he said to Jacob:

"Feed me, I pray thee, with this red pottage, for I am faint;" and Jacob, seeing that he was really starving, answered:

"Sell me this day thy birthright."

For you see Esau was the elder twin, and, of course, had the birthright, and that meant a great deal in those days. It meant that after his father's death he would inherit most of his father's riches and all his importance, and would take his father's place at the head of the tribe. And the birthright was something a man *could* sell or give away, although he would have to be very hard pressed to do it. So Jacob, seeing that Esau was dying for food, said:

"Sell me thy birthright for it," and Esau said bitterly:

"Behold, I am at the point to die and what profit shall the birthright do to me?"

And Jacob, before he would give him anything to eat, said:

"Swear to me first of all," and he sware unto him, and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. Poor, weak, unhappy, cowardly Esau! Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentils; and he did eat and drink, and rose up and went his way; so Esau despised his birthright.

Esau really seems to have been a very troublesome person, for the next thing we hear is of his marriage to two Hittite women named Judith and Bashemath, "who were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah." In those days a man could have two or three wives at the same time, if he wanted to, though Abraham and Isaac seem to have preferred our way of having only one. I suppose Rebekah grew more fond than ever of her son Jacob after Esau married these women she did not like.

And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim so that he could not see, he called Esau, his elder son, and said unto him:

"My son."

And Esau answered:

"Here am I."

And Isaac said:

"Behold now I am old. I know not the day of my death.

Now, therefore, take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field and take me venison; and make me savory meat such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die."

Now Rebekah heard all that Isaac said, and when she had seen Esau well on his way to the field to hunt the venison, she called Jacob to her and said to him:

"Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau, thy brother, saying, 'Bring me venison and make me savory meat that I may eat, and bless thee before the Lord before my death.' Now, therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command thee. Go now to the flock, and fetch me from thence two good kids of the goats; and I will make them savory meat for thy father, such as he loveth; and thou shalt bring it to thy father, that he may eat, so that he may bless *thee* before his death."

For you see, now that Jacob had the birthright, Rebekah wanted him to have his father's blessing also, and though Isaac might bless twenty children if he wanted to, *the* blessing, given just before a man's death, was a very important ceremony and could only be given once. Jacob listened to all his mother's words, and then he said:

"Behold Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man. My father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver (as indeed he might), and I shall bring a curse upon me and not a blessing."

But his mother answered him that she would take all responsibility of the deed.

"Upon me be the curse, my son," she said, "only obey my voice and go fetch me them."

So Jacob went and fetched the kids and brought them to his mother; and she made savory meat such as his father loved. And Rebekah took the goodly raiment of Esau her

elder son which were with her in the house, and put them upon Jacob, her younger son: and she put the skins of the kids of the goats upon his hands and upon the smooth of his neck: and she gave the savory meat and the bread which she had prepared into the hand of her son Jacob. And he came unto his father, and said:

"My father."

And he said:

"Here am I. Who art thou, my son?" (For you remember Isaac could not see.)

And Jacob said unto his father:

"I am Esau, thy firstborn. I have done according as thou badest me: arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me."

And Isaac said unto his son:

"How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son?"

And he said:

"Because the Lord thy God sent me good speed." (And I think that was really the worst lie Jacob told, though they were all as bad as they could be.)

Isaac must have felt that all was not quite right, for he said next:

"Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son Esau or not."

And Jacob went near unto his father Isaac; and he felt him, and said:

"The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau."

And he discerned him not, because his hands were hairy as his brother Esau's hands; so he blessed him. And he said once more, poor old man!

"Art thou my very son Esau?"

And Jacob answered:

"I am."

JACOB RECEIVING ESAU'S BLESSING FROM HIS FATHER ISAAC

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Then Isaac told him to bring the venison, and he brought it near to him and he did eat: and he brought him wine and he drank. And his father Isaac said unto him:

"Come near now, and kiss me, my son."

And he came near and kissed him; and he smelled the smell of his raiment and blessed him, and said:

"See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed," for you remember that Jacob had put on Esau's clothes.

Then Isaac gave the great, the never-to-be-repeated blessing.

"God give thee of the dew of heaven," he said to Jacob, "and of the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine. Let peoples serve thee and nations bow down to thee. Be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee. Cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be every one that blesseth thee."

And it came to pass that as soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and Jacob was yet scarce gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau . . . . came in from his hunting. And he also made savory meat and brought it unto his father; and he said unto his father:

"Let my father arise and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me."

And Isaac said:

"Who art *thou?*"

And he said:

"I am Esau thy son, thy firstborn, Esau."

And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said:

"Who then is he that hath taken venison, and brought it to me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest and have blessed him? Yea, and he shall be blessed." For

Isaac knew now that he had been cheated that it was too late to help it.

When Esau heard these words of his father, he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry:

"Bless me, even me also, O my father!"

And he said:

"Thy brother came with guile, and hath taken away thy blessing."

And Esau said:

"Is he not rightly named Jacob, for he hath supplanted me these two times, (the word "Jacob" meant "one who takes the place of another," or supplants another); he took away my birthright, and behold now he hath taken away my blessing?"

Then poor Esau said:

"Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?"

And Isaac was obliged to answer:

"Behold, I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given to him for servants, and with corn and wine have I sustained him: and what shall I do for thee, my son?"

But Esau insisted:

"Hast thou but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father!" and he lifted up his voice and wept.

Then Isaac did all he could for his dearly-loved son, but it was not much in comparison to what he had given Jacob. He blessed him, saying:

"Behold of the fatness of the earth shall be thy dwelling, and of the dew of heaven from above; and by thy sword shalt thou live, and thou shalt serve thy brother. And it shall come to pass when thou shalt break loose that thou shalt shake his yoke from off thy neck."

"And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him," and indeed we cannot much wonder at that.

After Jacob's treachery, his old father grew very ill. Perhaps he did not wish to live when he found how Esau had been cheated. In any case, he thought he was about to die, and Esau said in his heart, "The days of mourning for my father are at hand, then will I slay my brother Jacob." And some one heard his words, and came and repeated them to Rebekah, and she was full of alarm. She sent for Jacob, and said:

"Behold, thy brother Esau, as touching thee, doth comfort himself, purposing to kill thee. Now, therefore, my son, obey my voice; and arise, flee thee to Laban, my brother, to Haran, and tarry with him a few days, until thy brother's anger turn away from thee, and he forget that which thou hast done to him: then I will send and fetch thee from thence: why should I be bereaved of you both in one day?"

But to Isaac Rebekah did not like to give her real reasons for wishing Jacob to go away. She feared too much that he might blame her for the bitter feeling between the two brothers. So she went to him with her old complaint against Esau's wives.

"I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth," she moaned; "if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these, what good shall my life do to me?"

Then Isaac, anxious to comfort her, "called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him and said unto him:

" 'Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan (or Heth). Arise, go to Padan-Aram, to the house of Bethuel, thy mother's father; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban, thy mother's brother.' "

So Jacob departed on his journey.

"Now Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Padan-Aram, to take him a wife from thence; and that as he blessed him he gave him a charge,

saying: 'Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan;' and that Jacob obeyed his father and mother, and was gone . . . . ; and Esau saw that the daughters of Canaan pleased not his father Isaac," so what did the poor, stupid fellow do but go and pick himself out a third wife, and this time he chose the daughter of our old friend Ishmael, hoping to better suit his father. But I am afraid that did no good, for we do not hear any more about his new wife, and we must leave him with her while we follow Jacob on his travels.

CHAPTER IV

JACOB AND LABAN

"Jacob went out from Beersheba and went toward Haran," following the same road on which Abraham's servant had journeyed when he was sent to find Rebekah. And on his way "he lighted upon a certain place and tarried there all night because the sun was set; and he took one of the stones of the place, and put it under his head, and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed, and behold, a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven, and behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it." And in this beautiful dream Jacob thought he saw God standing above the ladder, promising to take care of him whithersoever he went, and to bring him again to this land, and to let his children live there too in happiness and prosperity, and the dream was so real to him that when he awoke he said to himself:

"Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not."

And to remember it, "he rose up early in the morning and took the stone that he had put under his head, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it, and he called the name of that place Bethel," which means "the house of God." Pouring oil upon a pillar or upon a heap of stones was the old way of consecrating a place, or making it holy, and when travelers came upon such monuments they would rest beside them and say their prayers.

Then Jacob continued on his journey—"lifted up his feet," was the old way of saying it—and came to the land of

the children of the east. And he looked and saw a well in a field, and three flocks of sheep lying there by it, "for out of the well they watered the flocks: and the stone upon the well's mouth was great. And thither were all the flocks gathered: and they rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the sheep, and put the stone again upon the well's mouth in its place." And Jacob said to the men who were taking care of the sheep:

"My brethren, whence be ye?"

And they said:

"Of Haran are we."

And he said unto them:

"Know ye Laban, the son of Nahor?"

And they said:

"We know him."

And he said:

"Is it well with him?" meaning was his health good, and was he prosperous?

And they said:

"It is well, and behold Rachel, his daughter, cometh with the sheep."

Then Jacob, who was a farmer, you know, said:

"Lo, it is yet high day, neither is it time that the cattle should be gathered together; water ye the sheep and go and feed them;" for he wanted the men to help this young girl who was coming with her flock. But they were lazy or indifferent.

"We cannot," said they, "until all the flocks be gathered together, and they roll the stone from the well's mouth; then we water the sheep."

Now the stone was too heavy for a girl to lift, and while Jacob yet spake with the men, Rachel came with her father's sheep, for she had the care of them.

"And it came to pass that when Jacob saw Rachel, the

daughter of Laban, his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban, his mother's brother, that he went near, and rolled the stone from the well's mouth for her, and watered the flock.

"And Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice and wept," and then he told her that he was her father's brother (or near relation), and that he was Rebekah's son; and she ran and told her father.

"And when Laban heard the tidings of Jacob, his sister's son, he ran to meet him, and embraced him and kissed him and brought him to his house." And Jacob told his uncle all about himself and his father and mother, and Laban said:

"Surely thou art my bone and my flesh," just as we would say "our own flesh and blood," or "our kith and kin." And Jacob stayed a month with his new relatives.

Then Laban, seeing that Jacob had no idea of leaving for the present and that he was making himself very useful among the flocks, said to him:

"Because thou art my brother, shouldest thou therefore serve me for nought? Tell me, what shall thy wages be?" meaning, of course, how shall I pay you for the work you do?

Now, "Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder was Leah and the name of the younger was Rachel. And Leah's eyes were tender; but Rachel was beautiful and well-favored." I used to think that meant that Leah had lovely eyes, though Rachel might be the handsomer of the two, but I am afraid that it is only the old way of saying that Leah's eyes were sensitive. Perhaps she was near-sighted. In any case, "Jacob loved Rachel," so he answered Laban's question about the wages by saying:

"I will serve thee seven years for Rachel, thy younger daughter."

And Laban said:

"It is better that I should give her to thee, than that I should give her to another man: abide with me."

And Jacob did abide with him. He "served seven years for Rachel: and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her." And at the end of the time he went to Laban and said:

"Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled."

"And Laban gathered together all the men of the place, and made a feast," and after that, in the evening, the wedding took place.

Now, of course, poor Jacob did not suspect any trickery; but Laban must have been very much like his sister Rebekah, and he had never been satisfied with the idea of Rachel being married before Leah; for in the old days they thought it was disgraceful for the elder daughter not to be married first. And like his sister, if Laban could not get his way by straight means, he took it by crooked ones. I do not know whether it was so dark that Jacob could not see his bride, or whether she had her face thickly covered with her veil, but the next morning, in the broad daylight, he found that it was Leah that he had married, and not Rachel. Then, of course, he was very angry. He hurried to Laban, and said:

"What is this thou hast done unto me? Did not I serve thee for Rachel? Wherefore then hast thou beguiled (or deceived) me?"

Then Laban soothed him with smooth words:

"It is not so done in our place," said he, "to give the younger before the first-born."

And he told Jacob that if he would go on with the marriage festivities, which lasted a week ordinarily, as the husband of Leah, and would serve him after that for another seven years, then indeed he should have Rachel, and should marry her at the beginning of the seven years of service.

And as Jacob loved Rachel very much and could only win her on these terms, and as the law permitted a man to have two wives at once, he concluded to swallow his anger and go back to serving his father-in-law. But "he loved also Rachel more than Leah always," although poor Leah was a good wife to him and tried to win his affection. She bore him many sons, but Rachel had no children for a long time, and she grieved sorely for them. At last, when Jacob already had many sons, Rachel had a baby of her own, and she called his name Joseph; and because Rachel was his mother, Jacob loved him more than all his other children.

By this time Jacob had served his father-in-law for the full fourteen years, although more and more against his will, and now after little Joseph was born, he had a great desire to go back to his own country. So he went to Laban, and said:

"Send me away that I may go unto mine own place, and to my country. Give me my wives and my children, for whom I have served thee, and let me go; for thou knowest my services wherewith I have served thee."

But Laban did not want him to go at all, and he answered:

"If now I have found favor in thine eyes, tarry: for I have divined that the Lord hath blessed me for thy sake;" and he told Jacob to "appoint his wages and he would give them."

Then Jacob said:

"Thou knowest how I have served thee and how the cattle have fared with me. For it was little that thou hadst before I came, and it hath increased unto a multitude; and the Lord hath blessed thee whithersoever I turned: and now when shall I provide for my own house?"

And, with two wives and eleven children, it was no wonder Jacob felt anxious to work for himself.

Then Laban said:

"What shall I give thee?"

And Jacob made this agreement with him, that they should look through all the flocks and that Laban should give him all the sheep and goats that were speckled and spotted and black, and keep all the pure white ones for himself; and Laban thought this was a fine plan, because most of the animals were sure to be white. But it turned out just the other way, and then Laban and his sons were angry with Jacob.

And Jacob heard Laban's sons saying:

"Jacob hath taken away all that was our father's; and of that which was our father's hath he gotten all this wealth;" and he saw that the countenance of Laban was not toward him, as beforetime, and he decided that the time had come for him to go away. But he was only one man against Laban and his sons, and he was afraid they would not let him take all his speckled animals with him if he went openly, so he resolved to slip away without their knowledge. But first it was necessary to see how his wives would feel about this plan. He sent, therefore, asking Rachel and Leah to come to the field unto his flocks, where they could talk without being overheard, and there said to them:

"I see your father's countenance, that it is not turned toward me as beforetime, but . . . . . ye know that with all my power I have served your father. And your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times, ... but God suffered him not to hurt me . . . . . Thus God hath taken away the cattle of your father, and given them unto me. Now, the angel of God said unto me in a dream: . . . . . 'Arise, get thee out from this land and return unto the land of thy nativity.' "

And then he waited to see what they would say. And Rachel and Leah answered:

"Is there yet any portion or inheritance for us in our

father's house? Are we not counted of him strangers? For he hath sold us and hath also quite devoured our money. (What a dreadful old person Laban seems to have been!) For all the riches which God hath taken away from our father, that is ours and our children's: now, then, whatsoever God hath said unto thee, do!"

After this Jacob only waited for a convenient time, and when his father-in-law was gone to shear the sheep, he "set his sons and his wives upon the camels," and "stole away, unawares to Laban the Syrian, in that he told him not that he fled." "He carried away all his cattle and all his substance which he had gathered in Padan-Aram" (Mesopotamia), and "fled with all that he had," and he "passed over the River (when they say "the River" they always mean the Euphrates), and set his face toward the mountain of Gilead."

Now Rachel on leaving had taken her father's teraphim and carried them off with her, without a word to any one. The teraphim were little household images or relics that people carried about with them, and prized very highly.

"And it was told Laban on the third day that Jacob had fled. And he took his brethren with him, and pursued after him seven days' journey; and he overtook him in the mountain of Gilead." And when he came up with him, Jacob had pitched his tent in the mountains, and Laban and his party pitched theirs there too. And when they met, Laban, who always had a smooth tongue, said to Jacob:

"What hast thou done, that thou hast stolen away unawares to me, and carried away my daughters as captives of the sword? Wherefore didst thou flee secretly and steal away from me, and didst not tell me, that I might have sent thee away with mirth and with songs, with tabret and with harp; and hast not suffered me to kiss my sons (grand-

sons) and my daughters? Now hast thou done foolishly. It is in my power to do thee hurt."

And he went on with his reproaches; but in the end confessed to Jacob that God had told him in a dream that he must not interfere with him. And he ended by asking:

"And now, though thou wouldest needs be gone, because thou sore longedest after thy father's house, yet wherefore hast thou stolen my gods?" meaning, of course, the teraphim which Rachel had taken.

Then Jacob, who knew nothing about the theft, told Laban quite frankly that he had stolen away secretly because he was afraid "lest thou shouldest take thy daughters from me by force," but bade him to search the tents, and if he found his teraphim, he would himself kill the person who had stolen them. "And Laban went into Jacob's tent, and into Leah's tent, and into the tent of the two maid-servants; but he found them not. And he went out of Leah's tent and entered into Rachel's tent. Now, Rachel had taken the teraphim, and put them in the camel's furniture (or saddle) and sat upon them. And Laban felt all about the tent, and found them not."

Then Jacob was wroth and chode with Laban, saying:

"'What is my trespass? What is my sin that thou hast hotly pursued after me? Whereas thou hast felt about all my stuff, what hast thou found of all thy household stuff? Set it here before my brethren and thy brethren that they may judge betwixt us two. This twenty years have I been with thee. The rams of thy flocks have I not eaten. That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee; I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day or stolen by night. This I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night, and my sleep fled from mine eyes. These twenty years have I been

in thy house; I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy flock, and thou hast changed my wages ten times. Except the God of my fathers, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely now hadst thou sent me away empty. God hath seen mine affliction and the labor of my hands, and rebuked thee yesternight."

But Laban said:

"The daughters are my daughters, and the children are my children, and the flocks are my flocks, and all that thou seest is mine: and what can I do this day unto these my daughters or unto these children which they have borne? And now come, let us make a covenant (or agreement), I and thou; and let it be for a witness between me and thee."

Then, according to an old custom, "Jacob took a stone and set it up for a pillar," and "said unto his brethren: 'Gather stones,' and they took stones and made an heap; and they did eat there by the heap." And they called the place Galeed, that is, "the heap of witness," or Mizpah, which means a watch-tower, for Laban said:

"The Lord *watch* between thee and me when we are absent one from another," and also "God is witness betwixt thee and me."

And he must really have loved his daughters, for he made Jacob promise that he would not afflict them or marry any other woman; and Laban promised for his part not to cross over the heap of stones to follow Jacob. And Laban swore by the God of Nahor and Jacob by the Fear of Isaac to keep the covenant. "And Jacob offered a sacrifice in the mountain, and called his brethren to eat bread; and they did eat bread and tarried all night in the mountain. And early in the morning Laban rose up, and kissed his sons and daughters and blessed them: and Laban departed and returned to his place. And Jacob went on his way."

CHAPTER V

JACOB'S JOURNEYINGS

No sooner were Jacob's troubles over with Laban than he began to worry as to how his brother Esau would receive him. He had left home in mortal fear lest Esau should kill him, and though twenty years' absence might be supposed to have softened his brother's heart, Jacob did not care to approach him without preparation. "So he sent messengers before him to Esau, unto . . . . the land of Seir, the field of Edom." And he commanded them, saying:

"Thus shall ye say unto my lord Esau: Thus saith thy servant Jacob, I have sojourned with Laban and stayed until now: and I have oxen and asses and men-servants and maid-servants: and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find grace in thy sight."

And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying:

"We came to thy brother Esau, and moreover he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him."

Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed: and he divided the people that was with him, and the flocks and the herds and the camels, into two companies; and he said:

"If Esau come to the one company and smite it, then the company which is left shall escape;" which was a very good plan.

Then he prayed very earnestly, saying:

"O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac . . . I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and

of all the truth which thou hast showed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two companies. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I fear him, lest he come and smite me, the mother with the children."

Jacob lodged that night at the place where he made his prayer, and the next morning he picked out a present for Esau, a very princely gift: "two hundred she-goats and twenty he-goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, thirty milch camels and their colts, forty kine and ten bulls, twenty she-asses and ten foals." Then he gave these animals into the charge of some of his servants and sent them on ahead of him. And he told the head man that when Esau should meet him and should ask, "Whose art thou? and whither goest thou? and whose are these?" he should reply, "They be thy servant Jacob's; it is a present sent unto my lord Esau; and behold, he also is behind us." And he told all the other men to answer in the same way.

For Jacob said to himself: "I will appease him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face, and peradventure he will accept me." "He himself lodged that night in the company, and he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two hand-maidens and his eleven children, and passed over the ford of Jabbok." And he sent them all ahead of him, and was left alone, and there he dreamt he was wrestling all night with a strong man. And he thought that as the morning came his antagonist said to him:

"Let me go, for the day breaketh."

And he answered:

"I will not let thee go, except thou bless me."

Then the man said:

"What is thy name?"

And when he answered:

"Jacob,"

He said:

"Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel (which means "he who striveth with God"), for thou has striven with God and with men, and hast prevailed."

Then Jacob said:

"Tell me, I pray thee, *thy* name?"

But the stranger only answered:

"Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name?"

And he blessed him there. Then Jacob guessed who He was, and he called the name of the place Peniel (which means "the face of God"). "For," said he, "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." And when he rejoined the rest of his party, as the sun was rising, they noticed that he halted upon his thigh; that is, he walked lame.

And that morning "Jacob lifted up his eyes," and saw Esau coming with his four hundred men. He hastened to range his company hurriedly, for he knew not whether Esau came in peace or war, dividing the children between Leah and Rachel and the handmaids. First he put the handmaids, then Leah and her children, and behind them all, in the safest place, his dear Rachel and her little Joseph. Then he passed on ahead of them all to meet Esau, and as he drew near to him he bowed seven times to the ground to show his great respect. And to his joy and surprise "Esau ran to meet him and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him: and they wept." And when Esau saw the women and children, he asked:

"Who are these with thee?"

And Jacob said:

"The children which God hath graciously given thy servant."

And the handmaids drew near, they and their children, and they bowed themselves. And Leah also and her children came near, and bowed themselves, and after came Joseph near and Rachel, and they bowed themselves.

Then Esau said:

"What meanest thou by all this company which I met?" meaning the servants with the great present.

And Jacob explained that that was:

"To find grace in the sight of my lord."

And Esau said:

"I have enough, my brother; let that thou hast be thine."

But Jacob begged him, saying:

"Nay, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, then receive my present at my hand: forasmuch as I have seen thy face, as one seeth the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me. Take, I pray thee, my gift that is brought to thee; because God hath dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough."

"And he urged him, and he took it." So Esau and Jacob were friends at last.

And Esau wished to go on with Jacob, but Jacob said that his children were tender, and that if his flocks were overdriven one day they would die, and that, in fact, he must travel at a slower gait than would suit Esau.

"Let my lord, I pray thee, pass over before his servant," said Jacob, "and I will lead on softly according to the pace of the cattle that is before me, and according to the pace of the children until I come unto my lord at Seir."

And Esau said:

"Let me now leave with thee some of the folk that are with me."

But Jacob answered to that:

"What needeth it?"

So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir. And Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built him an house, and made booths for his cattle. And after that he came in peace to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padan-Aram, and encamped before the city. And he bought the parcel of ground where he had spread his tent from the children of Hamor, "for an hundred pieces of money. And he erected there an altar, and called it El-Clohe-Israel, which means 'God, the God of Israel.' "

Later on, they moved to Bethel, where Jacob built a great altar to the true God, because he found that some of his household were worshiping false images. He made them give up to him their pretended gods, and the rings which were in their ears as a sacrifice, and he buried them all under an oak near Shechem. And at Bethel, Rebekah's old nurse, Deborah, died, and they buried her under a tree which they named Allon-bachuth, or oak of weeping.

From Bethel they journeyed to Ephrath, and "while there was still some way to come there," Rachel's second child was born, another boy, whom she scarcely lived long enough to see. And "as her soul was in departing," she named her little boy Ben-oni, which means "the son of my sorrow," for she was sad at having to die and leave him; but his father called him Benjamin, or "the son of my right hand." And Rachel died and was buried in the way to Ephrath at a little place which we know and love by the name of Bethlehem. "And Jacob set up a pillar upon her grave: the same is the Pillar of Rachel's Grave unto this day," the Bible tells us. And whatever fault we may find with Jacob as a brother, we must always remember that he was a very loving and true husband to Rachel.

It seems a pity that Rachel could not have lived long enough for Isaac to see her, for at last, after all his wan-

derings, Jacob came to the oaks of Mamre, to Hebron, where Abraham had sojourned and where Isaac, now a very old man, was still living. He was a hundred and twenty years old by now, and only waited to see Jacob once more, then "he was gathered to his fathers, old and full of days: and Esau and Jacob, his sons, buried him."

Then those two found, just as Abraham and Lot had before them, that they had too many flocks and herds to live comfortably in the same land, so Esau took Mount Seir, or Edom, definitely for his home, and Jacob dwelt in the land of Canaan. Now, you will hear a great deal about the Edomites in reading Jewish history, and you will remember that the Edomites are the descendants of Esau. And, of course, the Ishmaelites were Ishmael's children, and the Moabites and Ammonites came down from Lot's two daughters, whom he carried off with him from Sodom. The Jews themselves were the children of Israel, and they were also called Hebrews; and the twelve tribes you will hear so much about descended from these twelve children of Jacob, of whom little Benjamin was the last.

CHAPTER VI

JOSEPH

Canaan was where Abraham and Isaac had lived, and there Jacob settled down at last. And there Joseph grew up until he was a lad of seventeen and considered old enough to take his share in the labor of the tribe, and feed the flocks with his brethren. "Now, Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colors," or, as it is described to us in another place, "a long garment with sleeves." "And his brethren saw that their father loved him more than any of them; and they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him. And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told his brethren: and they hated him yet the more." He said to them:

"Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed: for behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and lo, my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and behold, your sheaves came around and made obeisance to my sheaf."

And his brethren said to him, interpreting the dream in their own way:

"Shalt thou indeed reign over us?" or "Shalt thou indeed have dominion over us?"

"And they hated him yet the more for his dreams and for his words. And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it to his brethren, and said:

'"Behold, I have dreamed yet a dream, and, behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars made obeisance to me.'

"And he told it to his father and to his brethren," but even his father rebuked him at that, and said:

"What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?"

"And his brethren envied him, but his father kept the saying in his mind."

Now, Joseph's brothers went to feed their father's flocks in Shechem, and after they had been gone some time Israel said to him:

"Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? Come, and I will send thee unto them."

And Joseph answered:

"Here am I."

And his father said:

"Go now, see whether it be well with thy brethren and well with the flock; and bring me word again."

So he went out of the vale of Hebron, and came to Shechem, but he lost his way, and a certain man found him, and behold, he was wandering in the field; and the man asked him, saying:

"What seeketh thou?"

And he said:

"I seek my brethren: tell me, I pray thee, where they are feeding the flock."

And the man said:

"They are departed hence: for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.'"

And Joseph went after his brethren, and found them in Dothan, and they saw him afar off. Now while they had been away from home, they had been plotting against Joseph, and when they saw him approaching, they said one to another:

"Behold, this dreamer cometh. Come now, therefore,

and let us slay him, and cast him into one of the pits, and we will say, 'An evil beast hath devoured him:' and we shall see what will become of his dreams."

They were cruel, hard-hearted men! But one among them was kinder than the rest; his name was Reuben, and when he heard what they were planning, he said:

"Let us not take his life. Shed no blood; cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, but lay no hand upon him;" for Reuben meant to deliver him out of their hands that he might restore him to his father.

"And it came to pass that when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stript him of his coat, the coat of many colors that was on him; and they took him and cast him into the pit; and the pit was empty, there was no water in it." Then "they sat down to eat bread," and as they were at their lunch a traveling company of Ishmaelites came by from Gilead, "with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh (or laudanum), going to carry it down to Egypt." You have seen pictures of caravans crossing the desert, have not you? I suppose these Ishmaelites looked just like these pictures. Then Judah, another brother, had a sudden inspiration, and said to the others:

"What profit is it if we slay our brother and conceal his blood? Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother, our flesh;" though it seemed rather late to remember that. It was very customary in those days to sell men as slaves to other nations, and Egypt was a great slave market, since the upper classes there were rich and luxurious. So Judah's brethren hearkened unto him, and when a part of the caravan, a company of Midianites, who were the great merchantmen, were passing, "they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites

for twenty pieces of silver. And they brought Joseph into Egypt."

It seems these bad brothers did not tell Reuben what they had done; I suppose they knew that he would not sympathize with them, for "he returned unto the pit, and behold, Joseph was not in the pit; and he rent his clothes." (Tearing one's clothes was a sign of great trouble and mourning.) And he returned unto his brethren and said:

"The child is not: and I, whither shall I go?"

But of course they could not help him. Then they carried out the second part of their original plan. They "took Joseph's coat, and killed a he-goat, and dipped the coat in the blood; and they sent the coat of many colors, and they brought it to their father; and said: 'This have we found: know now whether it be thy son's coat or not.'"

Jacob recognized it and said:

"It is my son's coat: an evil beast hath devoured him: Joseph is without doubt torn to pieces."

And Jacob rent his garments, "and put on sackcloth," and mourned for his son many days. And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said:

"For I will go down to the grave to my son mourning."

"And his father wept for him." Poor Israel, poor old man! But do you remember how he cheated his own father, Isaac?

Meanwhile the Midianites had gone on to Egypt and had sold Joseph unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's (the kings of Egypt were generally called Pharaoh when they were not called Rameses), the captain of the guard. . . . "And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master, the Egyptian. And his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in

JOSEPH SOLD IN BONDAGE AMONG THE EGYPTIANS

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his hands. And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he ministered unto him; and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand. And it came to pass from the time that he made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake, and the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had, in the house and in the field. And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not aught that was with him, save the bread which he did eat."

"And Joseph was comely and well-favored," so much so that Potiphar's wife took a great fancy to him, and wanted him to be *her* servant altogether. And when Joseph preferred to be true to his master first, and cared more about pleasing him than pleasing her, she became very angry with him, and finally ceased to like him and wanted to drive him out of her husband's house. But there was no fault to find with Joseph, so she had to invent wicked stories about him, and she repeated them to Potiphar until he ended by believing them, and at last he took Joseph, and "put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison. But the Lord was with Joseph, and shewed kindness unto him, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it. The keeper of the prison looked not to anything that was under his hand, because the Lord was with him; and that which he did, the Lord made it to prosper." You see wherever Joseph went he made friends and was trusted; and, unlike his father, he never seems to have deceived any one.

"And it came to pass after these things that the butler of the king of Egypt and his baker offended their lord the

king. And Pharaoh was wroth against his two officers, against the chief of the butlers and against the chief of the bakers. And he put them in ward in the house of the captain of the guard, into the prison, the place where Joseph was bound. And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them (that is, put them in his care), and he ministered unto them: and they continued a season in ward." And while they were there, one night each of these men had a dream. "And Joseph came in unto them in the morning, and saw them, and behold, they were sad." And he asked them:

"Wherefore look ye so sadly to-day?"

And they said unto him:

"We have dreamed a dream, and there is none can interpret it;" for in these days they thought that every dream must mean something, and they would always run to a man they called an interpreter to have the dreams explained to them. And now that these two men were in prison, and had no way of understanding what their visions meant, of course they were troubled. Then Joseph said:

"Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell it to me, I pray you," meaning that if God sent the dream He could inspire any one He chose to interpret it.

The chief butler told his first.

"In my dream," said he, "behold, a vine was before me; and in the vine were three branches: and it was as though it budded, and its blossoms shot forth; and the clusters thereof brought forth ripe grapes: and Pharaoh's cup was in my hand; and I took the grapes and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand."

Joseph had no trouble in understanding what this meant. He said to the butler:

"This is the interpretation of it: the three branches are three days; within yet three days shall Pharaoh lift up

thine head, and restore thee unto thine office; and thou shalt give Pharaoh's cup into his hand, after the former manner when thou wast butler."

And then he added:

"But have me in thy remembrance when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house: for indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews: and here also have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon."

When the chief baker saw that Joseph had given a good interpretation to the butler's dream, he wished to tell his dream also.

"I also was in my dream," said he, "and behold, three baskets of white bread were on my head: and in the uppermost basket there was of all manner of bakemeats for Pharaoh, and the birds did eat them out of the basket upon my head."

And Joseph answered, and said:

"This is the interpretation thereof: the three baskets are three days; within yet three days shall Pharaoh lift up the head from off thee, and shall hang thee on a tree, and the birds shall eat thy flesh from off thee."

Then the poor chief baker was sadder than before. "And it came to pass the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast unto all his servants. . . . And he restored the chief butler unto his butlership again, and he gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand; but he hanged the chief baker," just as Joseph had foretold. "Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgat him," so that he was left in his prison for two years more, and might have been for twenty, if the king of Egypt himself had not taken to dreaming. Pharaoh slept heavily one night and had strange visions. He thought that he stood by the

river Nile, and that there came up out of the river seven kine, or cattle, well-favored and fat-fleshed; and they fed in the reed-grass. And then seven other kine came up after them out of the river, ill-favored and lean-fleshed; and stood by the other kine upon the brink of the river. And the ill-favored and lean-fleshed kine did eat up the seven well-favored and fat kine. So Pharaoh awoke. "And he slept and dreamed a second time: and behold, seven ears of corn came up upon one stalk, rank and good. And behold, seven ears, thin and blasted with the east wind, sprung up after them. And the thin ears swallowed up the seven rank and full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and behold it was a dream. And . . . in the morning . . . his spirit was troubled, and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all the wise men thereof: and told them his dreams, but there was none could interpret them unto him. Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying:

"'I do remember my faults this day: Pharaoh was wroth with his servants, and put me in ward in the house of the captain of the guard, me and the chief baker. And we dreamed a dream in one night, I and he. . . . And there was with us there a young man, an Hebrew, servant to the captain of the guard; and we told him, and he interpreted to us our dreams. . . . And it came to pass as he interpreted to us, so it was; I was restored unto mine office, and he was hanged.'"

When Pharaoh heard this he "sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon: and he shaved himself and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh." And Pharaoh said unto Joseph:

"I have dreamed a dream, and there is none can interpret it: and I have heard say of thee, that when thou hearest a dream thou canst interpret it."

But Joseph answered:

"It is not in *me: God* shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace."

Then the king told him his two dreams of the kine and the ears of corn, and Joseph saw at once that both meant the same thing.

"The dream of Pharaoh is one," said he: "what God is about to do, he hath declared unto Pharaoh. The seven good kine are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years: the dream is one. And the seven lean and ill-favored kine that came up after them are seven years, and also the seven empty ears, blasted with the east wind; they shall be seven years of famine. That is the thing which I spoke unto Pharaoh: what God is about to do he hath showed unto Pharaoh. Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt; and there shall come after them seven years of famine; and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine shall consume the land; and the plenty shall not be known in the land by reason of that famine which followeth; for it shall be very grievous. And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice, it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass."

Then, having declared to the King what was going to happen, Joseph went on to tell him what he had best do to prepare for it.

"Let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise," said he, "and set him over the land of Egypt . . . and let him appoint overseers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years. And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh for food in the cities, and let them keep it. And the food shall be for a store to the land against the seven years of famine, which

shall be in the land of Egypt; that the land perish not through the famine."

And this interpretation pleased Pharaoh so much that he said to his servants:

"Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom the spirit of God is?"

And he said to Joseph himself:

"Forasmuch as God hath showed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou: thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou."

And so, all in a moment, Joseph, from being a poor prisoner, became the second man in a great kingdom.

"See," said Pharaoh to him, "I have set thee over all the land of Egypt."

And Pharaoh took off his signet ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; and he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had, and they cried before him, "Bow the knee!" Think what a change for our poor Joseph! And still the King had not done enough for him.

"I am Pharaoh," he said, meaning that he could command what he liked, "and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or his foot in all the land of Egypt."

And he gave Joseph an Egyptian name, Zaphnath-paaneah, but it is too hard to pronounce, so we will not call him by it; and he gave him a wife called Asenath, a daughter of the priest of On, a great dignitary in the kingdom. Joseph was just thirty at this time. And he "went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt." And it all happened as he had said. "In the seven plenteous years the earth brought forth by handfuls. And he gathered up all the food of

the seven years . . . and laid up the food in the cities: the food of the field which was round about every city laid he up in the same. And Joseph laid up corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left remembering, for it was without number."

Meanwhile two children were born to him, both boys, and the first he called Manasseh, which means "making to forget," "For," said Joseph, "God hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house;" and to the second he gave the name of Ephraim, or "fruitful," because God had made him fruitful or prosperous in the land which he had entered as a slave.

And after the seven years of plenty came the seven years of famine, "according as Joseph had said, and there was famine in all lands; but in the land of Egypt," thanks to him, "there was bread."

"And when all the land of Egypt was famished the people cried to Pharaoh for bread; and Pharaoh said unto the Egyptians:

"'Go unto Joseph: what he saith to you, do.'

"And the famine was over all the face of the earth and Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold unto the Egyptians; and the famine was sore in the land of Egypt. And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn; because the famine was sore in all the earth."

CHAPTER VII

JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS

Of course, this dreadful famine, which was sore in all the earth, had not passed by the land of Canaan, and Jacob and his family, as well as the rest of the people, were greatly in need of food. And when Jacob heard that there was corn to be had in Egypt, he said to his sons:

"Why do ye look one upon another?" ("Why do you hesitate?" that is.) "Get you down thither, and buy for us from thence, that we may live and not die."

"And Joseph's ten brothers went down to buy corn from Egypt. But Benjamin, Joseph's (own) brother, Jacob sent not with his brethren; for he said, 'Lest peradventure mischief befall him.'" You remember that Benjamin was Rachel's child, and the youngest of all the twelve sons of Jacob.

When the other brothers reached Egypt they came up with the people of all the other nations to buy corn, for they came to Egypt now from the very ends of the earth. "And Joseph was the governor over the land; he it was that sold to all the people of the land: and Joseph's brethren came, and bowed down themselves to him with their faces to the earth," of course, never dreaming that this great Egyptian lord was their poor little brother whom they had treated so badly. "And Joseph saw his brethren and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly with them; and he said unto them:

"'Whence come ye?'"

And they said:

"From the land of Canaan to buy food."

And Joseph remembered the dream which he had dreamed of them. Thus he said:

"Ye are spies: to see the nakedness of the land are ye come," for he wanted an excuse to detain them. And they said:

"Nay, my lord, but to buy food are thy servants come. We are all one man's sons; we are true men, thy servants are no spies."

But Joseph insisted:

"Nay, but to see the nakedness of the land ye are come."

Then they tried again to explain who they were, saying:

"We, thy servants, are twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not," meaning that one brother was dead, which must have made Joseph smile.

But he pretended not to believe them, and said sternly:

"That is it that I have spoken unto you, saying ye are spies: hereby ye shall be proved: by the life of Pharaoh ye shall not go forth hence, except your youngest brother come hither. Send one of you, and let him fetch your brother, and ye shall be bound, that your words may be proved, whether there be truth in you: or else by the life of Pharaoh, surely ye are spies."

"And he put all together into ward three days."

Then on the third day he sent for them, and said, pretending to relent:

"This do and live; for I fear God: if ye be true men, let one of your brethren be bound in your prison house; but go ye, carry corn for the famine of your houses, and bring your youngest brother unto me; so shall your words be verified and ye shall not die."

For what Joseph wanted was to see his little brother Benjamin again.

The ten brothers could do nothing but agree to Joseph's plan; but as they stood before him they talked among themselves, and it seemed to them that this trouble was theirs because of their old treachery to their brother Joseph.

"We are verily guilty concerning our brother," said they, "in that we saw the distress of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear him; therefore is this distress come upon us."

And Reuben said:

"Spake I not unto you, saying, 'Do not sin against the child;' and ye would not hear? Therefore also his blood is required," meaning that God was making them answer for Joseph's life. They said all this in their own language, thinking that no one could understand them, for in their conversation before they had had an interpreter; but, of course, Joseph knew their tongue as well as they did, and when he heard what they said, "he turned himself about from them and wept; and he returned to them, and spake to them, and took Simeon from among them, and bound him before their eyes. Then Joseph commanded to fill their vessels with corn, and to restore every man's money into his sack, and to give them provision for the way: and thus was it done unto them. And they laded their asses with their corn, and departed thence. And as one of them opened his sack to give his ass provender in the lodging-place, he espied his money," which he thought, of course, that he had given for the corn, "and behold, it was in the mouth of his sack. And he said unto his brethren, 'My money is restored, and lo, it is even in my sack;' and their hearts failed them, and they turned trembling one to another, saying:

" 'What is this that God hath done unto us?' " for they felt that there was something more in this than they could understand. And they came unto Jacob their father,

unto the land of Canaan, and told him all that had befallen them, saying:

"The man, the lord of the land, spake roughly with us, and took us for spies of the country. And we said unto him, 'We are true men; we are no spies; we be twelve brethren, sons of our father; one is not, and the youngest is this day with our father in the land of Canaan.' And the man, the lord of the land, said unto us: 'Hereby shall I know that ye are true men; leave one of your brethren with me, and take corn for the famine of your houses, and go your way: and bring your youngest brother unto me: then shall I know that ye are no spies, but that ye are true men: so will I deliver you your brother, and ye shall traffick in the land.'"

Then they emptied their sacks before their father, "and every man's bundle of money was in his sack;" "and when they and their father saw their bundles of money, they were afraid."

And Jacob said:

"Me have ye bereaved of my children. Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away; all these things are against me."

Then Reuben tried to comfort him.

"Slay *my* two sons if I bring him not to thee," he cried, "deliver him into my hand, and I will bring him to thee again."

But Jacob answered:

"My son (Benjamin) shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he only is left: if mischief befall him by the way in which ye go, then shall ye bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave."

At that time his sons did not urge him any more, but very soon they had eaten up the corn which they had brought out of Egypt, and then when Jacob said to them:

"Go again, buy us a little food;"

Judah answered him:

"The man did solemnly protest unto us, saying, 'Ye shall not see my face unless your brother be with you.' If thou wilt send our brother with us, we will go down and buy thee food; but if thou wilt not send him, we will not go down, for the man said unto us, 'Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you.' "

And Jacob said:

"Wherefore dealt ye so ill with me, as to tell the man whether ye had got a brother?"

And they answered:

"The man asked us straitly concerning ourselves and concerning our kindred, saying, 'Is your father yet alive? Have ye another brother?' and we told him according to the tenor of these words: could we in any wise know that he would say, 'Bring your brother down'? "

Then Judah begged his father, saying:

"Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go; that we may live and not die, both we and thee, and also our little ones. I will be surety for him; of my hand shalt thou require him; if I bring him not unto thee and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame forever: for except we had lingered, surely we had now returned a second time."

Then Jacob gave in, but he tried to think how he might please this terrible Egyptian governor.

"Do this," he said to his sons, "take of the choice fruits of the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little balm and a little honey, spices and myrrh, nuts and almonds: and take double money in your hands; and the money that was returned in the mouths of your sacks carry again in your hands; peradventure it was an oversight: take also your brother, and come, go again

unto the man: and God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may release unto you your older brother and Benjamin. And if I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved."

"And they took that present, and they took double money in their hands, and Benjamin," and went down to Egypt, and Jacob was left to wait alone for their return.

And when Joseph heard that they had come back, and saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house:

"Bring the men into the house, and slay and make ready; for the men shall dine with me at noon."

But when the steward came to bring Joseph's brothers to his house, they were frightened, and said to each other:

"Because of the money that was returned in our sacks at the first are we brought in; that he may seek occasion against us, and fall upon us, and take us for bondsmen, and our asses."

"And they came near to the steward of Joseph's house," and showed him their trouble, and tried to explain matters to him, saying:

"Oh, my lord, we came indeed down at the first time to buy food: and it came to pass, when we came to the lodging-place, that we opened our sacks, and behold, every man's money was in the mouth of his sack, our money in full weight: and we have brought it again in our hands. And other money have we brought down in our hand to buy food: we know not who put our money in our sacks."

Then the steward comforted them:

"Peace be to you," he said, "fear not: your God and the God of your fathers hath given you treasure in your sacks: I had your money."

And he brought Simeon out unto them, and brought them into Joseph's house, and gave them water, and they

washed their feet; and he gave their asses provender. And they made ready the present against Joseph came at noon; for they heard that they should eat bread there. And when Joseph came home they brought him the present which was in their hands into the house, and bowed down themselves to him to the earth. And he asked them of their welfare, and said:

"Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? Is he yet alive?"

And they said:

"Thy servant our father is well, he is yet alive."

And they bowed their heads and made obeisance. And he lifted up his eyes and saw Benjamin, his brother, his mother's son, and said:

"Is this your youngest brother, of whom ye spake unto me?"

And then he said:

"God be gracious unto thee, my son," but spoke not another word, and made haste to leave the room, for he could not keep back the tears when he saw his little brother once again.

And he sought where to weep; and he entered into his chamber and wept there; and he washed his face and came out; and refrained (or controlled) himself, and said:

"Set on bread."

And the servants "set on for him by himself, and for his brothers by themselves, and for the Egyptians which did eat with him by themselves, because the Egyptians might not eat with the Hebrews, for that is an abomination unto the Egyptians." And when they were seated at table, the brothers found each one put in his right place, "the first-born according to his birthright, and the youngest according to his youth," and they marvelled one with another. "And Joseph took and sent messes unto them

from before him (that is, dainties from his own table), but Benjamin's mess was five times so much as any of theirs. And they drank, and were merry with him."

Then, when the dinner was finished, Joseph said to his steward:

"Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put every man's money in his sack's mouth. And put my cup, my silver cup, in the sack's mouth of the youngest, and his own money."

The man did as he was told; and "as soon as the morning was light, they were sent away, they and their asses."

When they were gone out of the city, and were not yet far off, Joseph said unto his steward:

"Up, follow after the men, and when thou dost overtake them, say unto them, 'Wherefore have ye rewarded evil for good? Is not this it in which my lord drinketh? (meaning the silver cup). Ye have done evil in so doing.' "

So the steward hurried after the ten brothers, and when he overtook them he repeated Joseph's words exactly, and they, knowing themselves innocent, were indignant.

"Wherefore speaketh my lord such words as these?" said they. "God forbid that thy servants should do such a thing. Behold, the money which we found in our sacks' mouths we brought again unto thee out of the land of Canaan: how then should we steal out of thy lord's house gold or silver? With whomsoever of thy servants it be found let him die, and we also will be my lord's bondsmen."

Then the steward said:

"Now also let it be according unto your words: he with whom it is found shall be my bondsman, and ye shall be blameless."

And the brothers, feeling sure that nothing could be found, "hasted and took down every man his sack to the ground, and opened every man his sack. And he searched,

and began at the eldest and left at the youngest;" and, of course, the cup was discovered in Benjamin's sack. "Then they rent their clothes" in their distress and bewilderment, "and laded every man his ass and returned to the city. And Judah and his brethren came to Joseph's house; and he was yet there, and they fell before him to the ground. And Joseph said unto them:

" 'What deed is this that ye have done? Know ye not that such a man as I can indeed divine?' " that is, know things by magic.

And Judah spoke for them all, crying:

"What shall we say unto my lord? What shall we speak? Or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants. Behold, we are my lord's bondsmen, both we and he in whose hand the cup is found."

But Joseph answered:

"God forbid that I should do so: the man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my bondsman; but as for you, get you up in peace unto your father."

Then were the brothers more sorely perplexed, for how could they go home and face their father, having left Benjamin a slave in Egypt?

So Judah came near unto Joseph, and pleaded with him.

"Oh, my lord," he begged, "let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not thine anger burn against thy servant; for thou art even as Pharaoh. My lord asked his servants, saying, 'Have ye a father or brother?' and we said unto my lord, 'We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one, and his brother is dead, and he is left alone of his mother, and his father loveth him.' And thou saidst unto thy servants, 'Bring him down unto me that I may set mine eyes upon him.' And we said unto my lord, 'The lad cannot leave his father; his father would die.' And thou

saidst unto thy servants, 'Except your youngest brother come down with you, ye shall see my face no more.' And it came to pass that when we came up unto thy servant my father, we told him the words of my lord. And our father said, 'Go again, buy us a little food.' And we said, 'We cannot go down: if our youngest brother be with us, then will we go down; for we may not see the man's face except our youngest brother be with us.' And thy servant my father said unto us, 'Ye know that my wife bare me two sons; and the one went out from me, and I said surely he is torn in pieces; and I have not seen him since: and if ye take this one also from me, and mischief shall befall him, ye shall bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.'

"Now, therefore, when I come to thy servant my father, and the lad be not with us; seeing that his life is bound up with the lad's life; it shall come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not with us, that he will die, and thy servants shall bring down the grey hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to the grave For thy servant (meaning himself) became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, 'If I bring him not unto thee, then shall I bear the blame to my father forever.' Now, therefore, let thy servant, I pray thee, abide instead of the lad a bondsman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren. For how shall I go up to my father and the lad be not with me? lest I see the evil that shall come on my father."

Then Joseph could control himself no longer before all that stood by him; and he said:

"Cause every man to go out from me."

And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. And he wept aloud, and the house of Pharaoh heard. And he said unto his brethren:

"I am Joseph: doth my father yet live?"

But they could not answer him, for they were troubled at his presence, and did not understand what he was saying.

Then Joseph said:

"Come near unto me, I pray you."

And they came near. And he said:

"I am Joseph, your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. And now, be not grieved or angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and there are yet five years in the land in the which there shall be neither plowing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve you a remnant in the earth, and to save you alive by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his house, and ruler over all the land of Egypt."

And after he had shown his brothers, who were still absolutely speechless with amazement and fear, that he had forgiven them, he bade them:

"Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, 'Thus saith thy son Joseph: God hath made me lord of Egypt; come down to me, tarry not; and thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks and thy herds, and all that thou hast; and there will I nourish thee, for there are yet five years of famine, lest thou come to poverty, thou and thy household and all that thou hast.'" And then, as they still stared in bewilderment, he continued: "Behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you. And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither."

And when he had finished "he fell upon his brother

Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck. And he kissed all his brethren and wept upon them, and after that his brethren talked with him." I wonder what they said!

And the report spread all through the palace that Joseph's brothers had come: "and it pleased Pharaoh well and his servants." And Pharaoh said unto Joseph:

"Say unto thy brethren, 'This do ye; lade your beasts, and go, get you unto the land of Canaan; and take your father and your household and come unto me: and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land. Now thou art commanded, this do ye; take you wagons out of the land of Egypt for your little ones and for your wives, and bring your father, and come. Also regard not your stuff (or possessions); for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours.' "

And, of course, Joseph was glad enough to repeat to his brothers what the king had said, and they were glad in their turn to obey him. And Joseph not only gave them the wagons, as Pharaoh had commanded, and provisions for the way, but for each man he ordered besides changes of raiment, and to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver and five changes of raiment. "And to his father he sent after this manner: ten asses laden with the good things of Egypt, and ten she-asses laden with corn and bread and victual for his father by the way."

So he sent his brethren away, and they departed, and his last caution to them was:

"See that ye fall not out by the way," for he knew them of old and he did not want them to quarrel. And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father. And they told him, saying:

"Joseph is yet alive, and he is ruler over all the land of Egypt."

"And his heart fainted, for he believed them not." Then his sons told Jacob all the words of Joseph which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived; and he said:

"It is enough, if my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die."

And he started at once on his journey with all he had, and when they came to Beersheba, where Isaac had lived, he offered sacrifice unto the God of his fathers. And in the night he had one of these wonderful dreams or visions, and thought he heard God calling:

"Jacob, Jacob!"

And he answered:

"Here am I."

And God said:

"I am God, the God of thy fathers: fear not to go down into Egypt: for I will there make thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes."

And after this comforting dream they all went on from Beersheba, "and the sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, and their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him. And they took their cattle and their goods which they had gotten in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt, Jacob and all his seed with him: his sons and his sons' sons with him, his daughters and his sons' daughters, and all his seed brought he with him into Egypt. . . . All the souls of the house of Jacob, which came into Egypt, were three-score and ten." Quite a large family, you see. Now, they were to go and settle in the land of Goshen, which was one of the pleasantest spots in Pharaoh's kingdom, and Jacob sent

Judah before him unto Joseph to learn the way. "And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen," and when he saw his father at last he "fell on his neck and wept on his neck a good while." And Israel said to Joseph:

"Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, that thou art yet alive."

CHAPTER VIII

ISRAEL IN EGYPT

After the first gladness of their meeting was over, Joseph told his father and brothers that he must go to the king and tell him that they were come to him.

"I will say unto him," said he, "that the men are shepherds, for they have been keepers of cattle; and they have brought their flocks and their herds, and all that they have. And it shall come to pass when Pharaoh shall say, 'What is your occupation?' that ye shall say, 'Thy servants have been keepers of cattle from our youth till now, both we and our fathers;' that ye may dwell in the land of Goshen, for every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians," which meant that as the Egyptians hated to be shepherds Pharaoh would be very glad to have these strangers keep his cattle for him. And it happened just as Joseph had foreseen. He went to the king and said to him:

"My father and my brethren and their flocks and their herds, and all that they have, are come out of the land of Canaan; and behold, they are in the land of Goshen."

And from among his brethren he took five men, and presented them unto Pharaoh, who asked them:

"What is your occupation?"

And they answered as Joseph had told them:

"Thy servants are shepherds, both we and our fathers. To sojourn in the land are we come; for there is no pasture for thy servants' flocks, for the famine is sore in the land of

Canaan: now, therefore, we pray thee, let thy servants dwell in the land of Goshen."

Then Pharaoh spake unto Joseph, saying:

"Thy father and thy brethren are come unto thee: the land of Egypt is before thee; in the best of the land make thy father and thy brethren to dwell; in the land of Goshen let them dwell: and if thou knowest any able men among them, then make them rulers over my cattle."

Then Joseph brought his father to see Pharaoh, and Jacob blessed him, king though he was. And Pharaoh asked Jacob:

"How many are the days of the years of thy life?"

And Jacob answered:

"The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years," which may seem to you and me, my dears, a good long life, but was apparently not much thought of in those days, for he went on to say:

"Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained unto the days of the years of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage."

And then he blessed Pharaoh again, and went out from his presence.

So Joseph was able to place his father and brothers in possession of the best of the country of Egypt, in the land of Rameses or Goshen, and he nourished them all "with bread according to the number of their little ones."

And Joseph became more and more powerful and honored by the king, for the famine continued in Canaan and Egypt, and the only place to get corn was from Pharaoh's granaries. And Joseph gathered up all the money in Canaan and Egypt, which they had spent to buy corn, and brought it to Pharaoh's house; and when the people had no more money left they came to Joseph, saying:

"Give us bread, for why should we die in thy presence? for our money faileth."

And he answered them:

"Give your cattle, and I will give you for your cattle if money fail."

"And they brought their cattle unto him, and he gave them bread in exchange for the horses, and for the flocks and for the herds, and for the asses; and he fed them with bread in exchange for all their cattle for that year. And when that year was ended they came unto him the second year, and said:

"We will not hide from our lord how that our money is all spent; and the herds of cattle are my lord's: there is naught left in the sight of my lord but our bodies and our lands," and then the poor creatures proposed that Joseph should buy themselves, as they had nothing left to sell.

"Wherefore should we die before thine eyes?" said they, "buy us and our lands for bread and we and our lands will be servants unto Pharaoh: and give us seed that we may live and not die, and that the land be not desolate."

So the Egyptians sold every man his field, because the famine was sore upon them, and Joseph bought them all for the king, "and as for the people he made bondsmen of them from the cities from one end of the border of Egypt even to the other end thereof." Only the land of the priests he could not buy, because Pharaoh had already distributed among them a certain portion of corn, so that they had enough to eat. Then Joseph gave seed to the people and told them to sow the land, but he made a law that one-fifth of the in-gathering or harvest should belong to the king, and the people submitted.

"Thou hast saved our lives," said they to Joseph, "let us find grace in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants."

And as a wise minister is the great glory of his king, Pharaoh did well to prize Joseph.

Now Jacob, instead of dying as soon as he had seen Joseph, lived in Egypt for seventeen years, during which time he saw all his sons prosper in the land of Goshen, getting great possessions for themselves and having many children born to inherit them. But at length the time drew near that he must die; and he called his son Joseph and said unto him:

"If now I have found grace in thy sight . . . deal kindly and truly with me; bury me not, I pray thee, in the land of Egypt: but when I sleep with my fathers, thou shalt carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burying-place."

And Joseph answered:

"I will do as thou hast said "

And Jacob said:

"Swear unto me:" and he sware unto him.

"And Israel bowed himself upon the bed's head."

One day, soon after this, some one came to Joseph, and said:

"Thy father is sick," and he hurried to him, taking with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. And they told Jacob . . . :

"Behold, thy son Joseph cometh unto thee," and he strengthened himself and sat upon the bed.

And when Joseph came in, he said to him:

"God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me, and said unto me: 'Behold, I will make of thee a company of people, and will give thee this land to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession.' And now thy two sons, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt, are mine: Ephraim and Manasseh, even as Reuben and Simeon, shall be mine."

Then the old man's mind wandered back to the past.

"As for me," he said, "when I came from Padan, Rachel died to my sorrow in the land of Canaan, in the way, when there was still some way to come to Ephrath; and I buried her there in the way to Ephrath."

Then he saw Ephraim and Manasseh, and asked:

"Who are these?"

And Joseph told him:

"They are my two sons, whom God hath given me here."

And he said:

"Bring them, I pray thee, unto me, and I will bless them."

"Now the eyes of Israel were dim for age, so that he could not see, and Joseph brought them near to him; and he kissed them and embraced them."

And he said to him:

"I had not thought to see thy face; and lo, God hath let me see thy children also."

"And Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand towards Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand towards Israel's right hand, and brought them near unto him. And Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, crossing his hands wittingly (that is, he knew what he was doing), for Manasseh was the first-born." And he blessed Joseph's sons, saying:

"The God before whom my fathers, Abraham and Isaac, did walk, the God which hath fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which hath redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth."

Now when Joseph saw that his father had laid his right hand upon Ephraim's head, "it displeased him," and he

held up his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head unto Manasseh's head, saying:

"Not so, my father, for this is the first-born, put thy right hand upon his head."

But his father refused, saying:

"I know it, my son, I know it: he also shall become a people and he also shall be great: howbeit his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations."

And Israel said unto Joseph:

"Behold, I die: but God shall be with you, and bring you again into the land of your fathers. Moreover, I have given to thee one mountain-slope above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorites with my sword and with my bow."

Then he sent for his other sons, and said:

"Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you what shall befall you in the latter days. Assemble yourselves and hear, ye sons of Jacob; and hearken unto Israel your father," he began, and then spoke to each by name.

Reuben, although the first-born, "should not have the excellency," because he had done things to displease his father, and was "unstable as water," that is, he could not be depended upon, a sad fault indeed in a man.

Simeon and Levi were particularly devoted brothers apparently, but their father cautioned them as to their unruly tempers, "for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they houghed an ox. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce, and their wrath, for it was cruel."

Judah was to have the sceptre and the ruler's staff. His hand was to be on the neck of his father's enemies. He was the lion's whelp, and would prosper. His eyes would be red with wine; and his teeth white with milk, which meant that he would have vines and herds.

Zebulon was to dwell near the sea, and be an haven for ships.

Issachar was to be a shepherd, "and become a servant under task-work," but "in a land that was pleasant."

Dan should judge the people, and

Gad be at the head of a marauding band.

Asher should eat royal dainties.

Nephthali was commended for his goodly words.

Then came Joseph's turn, and to him Jacob could not say enough. He was a fruitful bough by a fountain: the archers had sorely grieved him and shot at him and persecuted him, but the arms of his hands were made strong by the Mighty One of Jacob. God Almighty should bless him with blessings of Heaven above and of the deep that coucheth beneath: "Unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills, they should be on the head of Joseph, on the crown of the head of him that was prince among his brethren."

Last of all was Benjamin, who was likened to a wolf that in the morning should devour the prey and in the evening divide the spoil.

These words were in part addressed by Jacob to his sons themselves, but most of all to their children and remote descendants, who were called the "twelve tribes of Israel," and were known by the names of one or another of Jacob's sons. Only there was no tribe of Joseph. His descendants called themselves either Ephraimites or "Children of Manasseh."

And Jacob charged his children that he was not to be buried in Egypt.

"I am to be gathered unto my people," he said to them, "bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan,

which Abraham bought . . . for a possession of a burying-place: there they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife: there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah."

"And when Jaco made an end of charging his sons he gathered up his feet in the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people. And Joseph fell upon his father's neck, and wept upon him and kissed him. And he commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father," which they did in forty days, and then "the Egyptians wept for him three-score and ten days. And when the days of weeping (or mourning) for him were past, Joseph went to the king, and said:

"My father made me swear, saying, 'Lo, I die: in my grave which I have digged for me in the land of Canaan, there shalt thou bury me.' Now therefore let me go up, I pray thee, and bury my father, and I will come again."

And Pharaoh said:

"Go up and bury thy father as he made thee swear."

And there was a great funeral procession. Joseph set forth, "and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt, and all the house of Joseph and his brethren, and his father's house: only their little ones and their flocks and their herds they left in the land of Goshen. And there went up with them both chariots and horsemen: and it was a very great company. And they came to the threshing-floor of Atad, which is beyond Jordan, and there they lamented with a very great and sore lamentation, and he made a mourning for his father seven days. And when the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning in the floor of Atad, they said, 'This is a grievous mourning to the Egyptians.'"

So with great honors and heavy lamentations was Jacob

carried by his sons into the land of Canaan, and buried in the cave of the field of Machpelah, which Abraham bought for a burying-place of Ephron the Hittite, before Mamre.

Then they all returned to Egypt, but Joseph's brothers were afraid that, now their father was dead, Joseph might no longer care for them or be kind to them.

"It may be," they said to each other, "that Joseph will hate us, and will fully requite us all the evil which we did unto him."

For they could never believe that their brother had really forgiven them. At last they sent a message to Joseph, saying:

"Thy father did command before he died, saying: 'So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee, now, the transgressions of thy brethren and their sin, for that they did unto thee evil:' and now we pray thee forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of thy fathers."

"And Joseph wept when they spake unto him. And his brethren went and fell down before his face, and said:

"'Behold, we be thy servants.'"

And Joseph said:

"Fear not; for am I in the place of God? And as for you, ye meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now, therefore, fear ye not: I will nourish you and your little ones."

"And he comforted them, and spake to their heart;" and at last they believed him, and tormented themselves no more.

And Joseph and all his brothers and their families continued in Egypt (though they thought of Canaan always as their home), and Joseph grew to be an old man, and

saw "Ephraim's children of the third generation," and lived to carry Manasseh's grandchildren on his knees.

And when at last he felt himself failing, he said to his brothers:

"I die, but God will surely visit you and bring you up out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob;" and he made them promise that when they went back they would carry his bones with them, and bury him by his father. "So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt."

CHAPTER IX

MOSES

For many years after Joseph's death the children of Israel continued to live in Egypt, until the land was filled with them and they waxed exceeding mighty, but after Pharaoh's death there arose a new king "who knew not Joseph" or his family, and evil times fell upon them. The new king was jealous of them from the first.

"Behold," said he to his people, . . . "the children of Israel are too many and too mighty for us: come, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that when there falleth out any war, they also join themselves unto our enemies and fight against us and get them up out of the land."

Therefore they set over the Israelites taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh (the new king was called Pharaoh also) store-cities, Pithan and Rameses. But the more they afflicted them the more they multiplied, and the more they spread abroad. "And the Egyptians abhorred the children of Israel, and made them serve with rigor; and made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field." Finally, not content with exacting hard work from the poor strangers in his land, the king, in order to bring their race to an end, ordered that only the girl-babies of the Hebrew women should be allowed to live. The cruel sentence read: "Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save

alive;" for the king thought that if the daughters were allowed to live they would marry Egyptians when they grew up, and forget their own country entirely.

Now, of course, the poor Hebrew women tried in every way to hide their babies, when they were boys, and to evade this wicked law. And it happened that just at this time a man of the tribe of Levi married a woman of the same tribe, and she had a son, and "when she saw that he was a goodly child, she hid him for three months," and when she could no longer conceal him, she took for him a sort of boat or ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch; and put the child therein, and laid it in the flags by the river's brink. Then she went away, leaving his sister to watch and see what would happen to him. The sister stood afar off, and presently she saw the daughter of Pharaoh coming down to bathe, walking with her maidens along by the river side, and the eyes of the princess fell upon the ark in the flags, and she sent her handmaid to fetch it. And she opened it and saw the child, and behold, the babe wept, and she had compassion on him, and said:

"This is one of the Hebrews' children."

Then the baby's sister drew near and said to the princess:

"Shall I go and call thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee?"

And Pharaoh's daughter said to her:

"Go."

And the maid went and called the child's mother, and Pharaoh's daughter said to her:

"Take this child away and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages."

So the little fellow's mother took him home, and kept him still a year or two, and then she brought him again to the princess, who adopted him as her own son.

And she called his name Moses, which means "to draw out," "because," she said, "I drew him out of the water."

We hear no more of little Moses until we meet him as a man, and then we see at once that though he had been brought up in the palace of the king of Egypt, he was a Hebrew at heart, for it happened one day, while he was watching the children of Israel at their work, that "he saw an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren, and he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he smote the Egyptian, killing him, and laid his body in the sand."

And the next day he went out and saw two Hebrews fighting together, and he said to the one who was in the wrong:

"Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow?"

And the man answered:

"Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? Thinkest thou to kill me as thou killedst the Egyptian?"

Then Moses feared and said:

"Surely the thing is known."

Now when word came to Pharaoh's ear of what Moses had done, he was very angry, and sought to slay him, and Moses had to fly from Egypt and hide himself in the land of Midian, in the great Arabian desert. And, weary and worn, he sat there one day by a well, when the seven daughters of the Priest of Midian came to draw water and fill the trough to water their father's flocks. And the shepherds came and drove them away, but Moses stood up and helped them and watered their flocks, and when they went home their father, Reuel, said to them:

"How is it that ye are come so soon to-day?"

And they said:

"An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shep-

herds, and moreover he drew water for us and watered the flock."

And Reuel asked:

"And where is he? Why is it that ye have left the man? Call him, that he may eat bread."

So Moses came to the house of the Priest of Midian, and was content to dwell there, and in time he married Zipporah, one of the seven daughters, and had a son, whom he named Gershon, or "sojourner in a strange land."

"And it came to pass in the course of those many days that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage; and they cried, and their cry came up unto God. . . . And God heard their groaning and took knowledge of them."

Now Moses still was keeping the flocks for his father-in-law (whom we now find called Jethro, instead of Reuel, for some reason), the priest of Midian, and one day when he was leading the flock to the back of the wilderness, and came near unto the mountain of God, to Horeb, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and behold, the bush burned with fire and was not consumed. And Moses said, very naturally:

"I will turn aside now, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt."

And when the Lord saw "that he turned aside to see, He called unto him out of the midst of the bush:

"'Moses, Moses!'"

And Moses answered:

"Here am I."

And the Voice said:

"Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."

Moreover, he said:

MOSES AND THE BURNING BUSH

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"I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob."

And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God. Then the Lord said:

"I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanite. . . . And now, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: moreover, I have seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them.

"Come, now, therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."

And Moses said unto God, in distrust of himself:

"Who am I that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?"

And God said:

"Certainly I will be with thee, and this shall be the token unto thee that I have sent thee: when thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain."

Then Moses said:

"Behold, when I come to the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, 'The Lord of your fathers hath sent me unto you,' and they shall say unto me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say unto them?" And God answered Moses's question in a way that I cannot explain to you, because I do not understand it myself. He said:

"I AM THAT I AM;" and told Moses to say to the children of Israel: "I AM hath sent me unto you;" and

then, "Jehovah, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob hath sent me unto you: this is my name forever and this is my memorial unto all generations."

And then God bade Moses:

"Go, and gather the elders of Israel together and say unto them, 'The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob, hath appeared unto me, saying, "I have surely visited you and seen that which is done to you in Egypt; and I have said I will bring you up out of the afflictions of Egypt unto the land of the Canaanite . . . unto a land flowing with milk and honey."' And they shall hearken to thy voice; and thou shalt come, thou and the elders of Israel, unto the king of Egypt, and ye shall say unto him:

" 'The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, hath met with us: and now, let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God.'

"And I know that the king of Egypt will not give you leave to go, no, not by a mighty hand. And I will put forth my hand and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof; and after that he will let you go. And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, and it shall come to pass that when ye go, ye shall not go empty: but every woman shall ask of her neighbor, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver and jewels of gold, and raiment; and ye shall put them upon your sons and upon your daughters; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians."

And Moses answered:

"But behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say:

" 'The Lord hath not appeared unto thee.' "

And God said unto him:

"What is that in thine hand?"

And he said:

"A rod."

And God said:

"Cast it on the ground;" and when he did so it became a serpent, and Moses fled before it, for he was afraid.

And God said:

"Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail," and though it must have taken courage, Moses did as he was told, and the serpent became a rod again in his hand. Then God told him that this should be a sign that the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob had truly appeared unto him. And he said furthermore unto him:

"Put now thy hand into thy bosom;" and he put his hand into his bosom, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous, white as snow. And that must have frightened Moses more than the snake, for leprosy is a dreadful disease from which one can never recover, and which forces one to live away from other men, and turns one's hair and eyebrows and skin a deadly white.

But God said:

"Put thy hand into thy bosom again," and when he took it out, it was turned again as his other flesh.

Then He told Moses that if they would not hearken to the first sign they would to the second, and that if it should possibly happen that these two signs did not convince them, then he must take water from the river and pour it upon the dry land, and that it should then be turned into blood. And still Moses did not want to go on this mission.

"Oh, Lord," said he, "I am not a man of words, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: for I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue."

And the Lord said:

"Who hath made man's mouth? Or who maketh a man

dumb, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now, therefore, go, and I will be with thy mouth and teach thee what thou shalt speak."

Then Moses gave in, resigned, but far from cheerful.

"Oh, Lord," said he, "send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send."

And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses because of his unwillingness, and He said:

"Is there not Aaron, thy brother, the Levite? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee he will be glad in his heart. And thou shalt speak unto him, and put the words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do. And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people: and it shall come to pass that he shall be to thee as a mouth, and thou shalt be to him as God. And thou shalt take in thine hand this rod, wherewith thou shalt do the signs."

Then Moses went, and returned to Jethro, his father-in-law, and said unto him:

"Let me go, I pray thee, and return unto my brethren which are in Egypt, and see whether they be yet alive."

And Jethro told him to "go in peace," finally.

And Moses took his wife and his sons, and set them upon an ass, and he returned to the land of Egypt with the rod of God in his hand.

Now Aaron, Moses's brother, was in Egypt all this time, but he too had a vision or dream, and heard the voice of God bidding him:

"Go into the wilderness to meet Moses."

And he went to meet him in the mountain of God (Sinai), and kissed him. And Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord wherewith he had sent him, and all the signs wherewith he had charged him. And they went and

gathered together all the elders of the Children of Israel; and Aaron spake the words which the Lord had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people. I wonder if Moses was not sorry then that he could not tel- the people all about it himself! But the elders believed Aaron, and when they heard that the Lord God had visited the Children of Israel, and that he saw their afflictions, they bowed their heads and worshiped.

CHAPTER X

THE PLAGUES OF EGYPT

After Moses and Aaron had convinced the Children of Israel that they were really sent from God to help them, they went to King Pharaoh, and said boldly:

"Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel: 'Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness.' "

But Pharaoh only laughed at them, asking:

"Who is the Lord that I should hearken unto his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, and moreover, I will not let Israel go."

Then Moses and Aaron spoke more moderately.

"The God of the Hebrews hath met with us," they said; "let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the wilderness and sacrifice unto the Lord our God; lest he fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword."

But the king would not listen, for the Hebrews were valuable servants, and he had no idea of having them leave his dominions. He became angry with the messengers.

"Wherefore do ye, Moses and Aaron, loose the people from their works?" said he. "Get you unto your burdens. Behold, the people of the land are now many, and ye make them rest from their burdens."

And the same day, after Moses and Aaron had left him, Pharaoh called his taskmasters of the Hebrews and their officers, and said to them:

"Ye shall no more give the people straw to make

brick, as heretofore; let them go and gather straw for themselves."

Now this was a very cruel command, for the "straw" that they used in making brick was a kind of stubble that grew in the fields, and up to this time Egyptians, who could stand the hot sun, had been sent to gather it for the brick-makers. From this time it seemed that the Children of Israel, besides working hard in the brick-kilns, must go stooping their backs in the scorching heat of the day to find the materials for their labor. And this was not only difficult to do, but they felt it a degradation also, for it had been considered up to this time the work of slaves. And as if this were not enough, Pharaoh expected the Hebrews to make just as many bricks as when the straw was picked and brought to them.

"The tale of the bricks which they did make heretofore," he told his taskmasters, "ye shall not diminish aught thereof: for they be idle; therefore, they cry, saying, 'Let us go and sacrifice to our God.' Let heavier work be laid upon the men that they may labor therein; and let them not regard lying words."

So the taskmasters went out and spoke to the people, saying:

"Thus saith Pharaoh: 'I will not give you straw. Go yourselves, get your straw where ye can find it; for nought of your work shall be diminished.'"

Then the Hebrews were scattered abroad throughout all the land of Egypt to gather stubble for straw, and the taskmasters were urgent, saying:

"Fulfill your works, your daily tasks as when there was straw." And when they could not do this, the taskmasters beat them, saying:

"Wherefore have ye not fulfilled your task both yesterday and to-day, in making bricks as heretofore?"

And the officers of the Children of Israel came unto Pharaoh, crying to him:

"Wherefore dealest thou thus with thy servants? There is no straw given unto thy servants, and they say to us, 'Make brick:' and behold, thy servants are beaten; but the fault is with thine own people."

But Pharaoh answered:

"Ye are idle, ye are idle; therefore say ye, 'Let us go and sacrifice to the Lord.' Go therefore now, and work; for there shall no straw be given you, yet shall ye deliver the tale of bricks."

And the officers of the Children of Israel did see that they were in evil case, and, being unreasonable, they were angry not so much with the king as with the men, who, as they thought, had led them into this trouble. And as they came forth from Pharaoh, they met Moses and Aaron, who stood in the way, and they said to them:

"The Lord look upon you and judge, because ye have made our savour to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to slay us."

And the two men did not know how to answer. Moses's doubts all came back, and he returned unto the Lord, asking reproachfully:

"Lord, wherefore hast Thou evil entreated this people; why is it that Thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Thy name, he hath evil entreated this people; neither hast Thou delivered Thy people at all."

And this time the Lord had patience with Moses's misgivings. He said to him:

"Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh: for by a strong hand he shall let them go, and by a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land."

But though Moses was strengthened and cheered by these

words, and hurried to repeat them to the Children of Israel, they were too unhappy to believe them, "they hearkened not unto him, for anguish of spirit and for cruel bondage."

Then the Lord told Moses to go again to Pharaoh and bid him let the Hebrews go out of his land, and of course Moses answered that the king would not listen to him if he did go.

"Behold," said he, "the Children of Israel have not hearkened unto me; how then shall Pharaoh hear me?"

But the Lord did not think that a sufficient reason. He commanded Moses and Aaron to go to Pharaoh, and if he should ask for a sign to show they were sent from God, Aaron was to cast down Moses's rod before Pharaoh. So they went, and when the rod was cast down it became a serpent, but Pharaoh sent for his wise men and sorcerers, the magicians of Egypt, and they did in like manner with their enchantments, for they cast down every man his rod and they became serpents. Then Aaron's rod swallowed up all the other rods, but Pharaoh did not think that was enough of a sign, and he would not give the Hebrews permission to depart.

Then the Lord said unto Moses:

"Pharaoh's heart is stubborn; he refuseth to let the people go. Get thee unto Pharaoh in the morning; lo, he goeth out unto the waters; and thou shalt stand by the river's brink to meet him; and the rod which was turned into a serpent shalt thou take in thine hand. And thou shalt say unto him, 'The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, hath sent me unto thee, saying, "Let my people go that they may serve me in the wilderness," and behold hitherto thou hast not hearkened';" and then for a sign, Moses was to smite with his rod upon the waters which are in the river and they should be turned into blood. And God said to Aaron:

"Take thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the waters of Egypt; over their rivers, over their canals and over their pools, and over all their ponds of water, that they may become bloody; and there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood and vessels of stone."

And Moses and Aaron did as the Lord commanded in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants, and all the waters were turned to blood and the fish that were in the river died, and the Egyptians could not drink from the river, and the blood was throughout the land. But the magicians did in like manner with their enchantments, and the king would not hearken unto Moses and Aaron. "And Pharaoh turned and went into his house, neither did he lay even this to heart. And all the Egyptians digged round about the river for water to drink; for they could not drink of the water of the river. And seven days were fulfilled, after that the Lord had smitten the river;" that is, a week passed away.

Then the Lord told Moses to go to the king again, and say:

"Thus saith the Lord, 'Let my people go that they may serve me.' And if thou refuse to let them go, behold I will smite all thy borders with frogs; and the river shall swarm with frogs which shall go up and come into thine house, and into thy bed-chamber, and upon thy bed, and into thine ovens, and into thy kneading-troughs (where they made the bread); and the frogs shall come both upon thee and upon thy people."

And to Aaron the Lord said:

"Stretch forth thine hand with thy rod over the rivers, over the canals, and over the pools, and cause frogs to come up upon the land of Egypt."

Moses and Aaron did as the Lord had commanded, and

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the frogs swarmed over all the land, but the wicked magicians were able to bring frogs of their own out of the river; and still Pharaoh might have refused to listen to the Hebrews, only now the magicians could not get rid of the frogs they had called up. Then Pharaoh was really frightened, and he sent for Moses and Aaron, and said:

"Entreat the Lord, that he take away the frogs from me, and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may sacrifice unto the Lord."

And said Moses:

"What time shall I entreat for thee that the frogs may be destroyed from thee and thy house, and remain in the river only?"

And Pharaoh answered:

"Against to-morrow."

And Moses said:

"Be it according to thy word; that thou mayst know that there is none other like unto the Lord our God."

And Moses and Aaron went out from the King, and Moses prayed unto the Lord to take away the frogs.

"And the Lord did according to the word of Moses, and the frogs died out of the houses, out of the courts, and out of the fields. And they gathered them together in heaps." But when Pharaoh saw that the land was delivered from this plague, he thought all danger was over, and he would not keep his promise to the Children of Israel.

So the Lord sent a terrible plague of lice upon Egypt. He bade Aaron stretch forth his rod and smite the dust of the earth, and it became lice throughout all the land. There were lice upon man and upon beast, and when the magicians tried with their enchantments to do likewise they failed utterly. Then even the magicians said to Pharaoh: "This is the finger of God;" but his heart was hardened,

and he would not listen to them any more than to Moses and Aaron.

After that the Lord bade Moses to rise up early in the morning and meet Pharaoh again on his way to his bath in the river, and to once more command him to let the Hebrews go, and to tell him that if he persisted in keeping them, He (the Lord) would send a plague of flies upon Egypt, "and the houses of the Egyptians should be full of swarms of flies, and the ground whereon they are;" and as a still further sign, the land of Goshen, where the Hebrews dwelt, should be the only part of the country free from the plague. "I will put a division between my people and thy people," said the Lord; "by to-morrow shall this sign be."

And as Pharaoh was still obstinate, sure enough the next day great swarms of flies came like clouds in the air, and entered into all the Egyptian houses, and settled over everything, until the land was corrupted by reason of them.

Then Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron, and said:

"Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land," meaning "here in Egypt."

But Moses said:

"It is not meet so to do. . . . We will go three days' journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the Lord our God as he shall command us."

Then said Pharaoh:

"I will let you go. . . . Only ye shall not go very far away: entreat for me."

And Moses answered:

"Behold, I go out from thee, and I will entreat the Lord that the swarms of flies may depart . . . to-morrow, only let not Pharaoh deal deceitfully any more in not letting the people go to sacrifice to the Lord."

"And Moses went out and entreated the Lord. And the

Lord did according to the word of Moses. He removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from his servants and from his people: there remained not one."

And again when Pharaoh saw that the danger was past, he broke his promise and would not let the people go.

Then God the Lord sent a very grievous murrain or disease upon the cattle in the field, upon the horses, the asses, the camels, the herds and the flocks; only of the animals belonging to the Children of Israel did not any die. "And Pharaoh sent, and behold, there was not so much as one of the cattle of the Israelites dead." But still he would not let them depart.

So the Lord said to Moses and Aaron:

"Take to you handfuls of ashes of the furnace, and let Moses sprinkle it to the heaven in the sight of Pharaoh."

And they took the ashes and came before Pharaoh; and Moses sprinkled it up towards heaven, and as he did so dreadful boils broke forth upon man and upon beast. "And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils, for the boils were upon them and upon all the Egyptians." But even now Pharaoh was obstinate, and would not give in. Then the Lord sent a dreadful hail upon the land, "a very grievous hail, such as had not been in Egypt since the day it was founded," but he allowed Moses and Aaron this time to tell the Egyptians what was going to happen, "so that they that feared the word of the Lord among the servants of Pharaoh made their servants and their cattle flee into the houses," and only "he that regarded not the word of the Lord left his servants and his cattle in the field. And the hail came down upon Egypt, upon man and upon beast, and upon every herb of the field; and the Lord sent thunder, and fire ran down upon the earth, and flashing continually amidst the hail, very grievous, such as had not been in the land since it became

a nation. And the hail smote all that was in the field, both man and beast, and brake every tree. Only in the land of Goshen, where the Children of Israel were, was there no hail." And Pharaoh sent in all haste to Moses and Aaron, saying:

"I have sinned this time: the Lord is righteous and I and my people are wicked. Entreat the Lord, for there hath been enough of these mighty thunderings and hails; and I will let you go, and ye shall stay no longer."

And Moses answered:

"As soon as I am gone out of the city I will spread abroad my hands unto the Lord; the thunders shall cease, neither shall there be any more hail. . . . But as for thee and thy servants, I know that ye will not yet fear the Lord God."

And Moses did as he had said, and the hail was stopped in time to save the wheat, though the barley in the ear and the blooming flax had both been killed. But "when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more and hardened his heart, he and his servants, . . . and did not let the Children of Israel go."

Once more Moses and Aaron came before Pharaoh, and spoke:

"Thus saith the Lord, the God of the Hebrews, 'How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me? Let my people go that they may serve me. Else if thou refuse . . . to-morrow will I bring locusts into thy border, and they shall cover the face of the earth, that one shall not be able to see the earth: and they shall eat the residue of that which is escaped, which remaineth to you from the hail, and shall eat every tree that groweth for you out of the field: and thy house shall be filled . . . and the houses of all the Egyptians, as neither thy fathers nor thy fathers'

fathers have seen, since the day that they were upon the earth unto this day.' "

And when Pharaoh would not yield, they turned to leave him, but the king's servants said to him:

"How long shall this man be a snare unto us? Let the men go, that they may serve the Lord their God: knowest thou not that Egypt is destroyed?"

And Pharaoh had Moses and Aaron brought back to him, and said to them angrily:

"Go, serve the Lord your God; but who are they that shall go?" meaning, "how many of you?"

Then said Moses:

"We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go; for we must hold a feast unto the Lord."

And Pharaoh was furious and said:

"Look to it, for evil is before you. Go now, ye that are men, and serve the Lord;" for he knew that if once the Hebrews started with their women and children they would never come back. And he had Moses and Aaron driven out from his presence. Then came the plague of the locusts upon the poor land of Egypt. Moses stretched forth his rod, and the Lord brought forth an east wind all that day and all the night; and when it was morning the east wind brought the locusts. And very grievous were they; before them there were no such locusts, neither after them shall be such. For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left; and there remained not any green thing through all the land of Egypt.

Then the King called for Moses and Aaron, crying:

"I have sinned against the Lord your God, and against you. Now, therefore, forgive, I pray thee, my sin only

this once, and entreat the Lord your God that he may take away from me this death only."

So Moses went out from Pharaoh and entreated the Lord, and He turned an exceeding strong west wind, which took up the locusts, and drove them into the Red Sea; there remained not one locust in all the border of Egypt; and again, when Pharaoh saw the trouble over, he laughed at Moses and Aaron, and forgot that he had made a promise or been afraid.

And the Lord sent a darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness which may be felt, a thick darkness in all the land for three days; but all the Children of Israel had light in their dwellings. And Pharaoh called to Moses out of the blackness of his house:

"Go ye, serve the Lord; only let your flocks and herds be stayed; let your little ones also go with you."

But Moses answered:

"Thou must also give into our hand sacrifices and burnt-offerings, that we may sacrifice unto the Lord our God. Our cattle also shall go with us; there shall not an hoof be left behind; for thereof must we take to serve the Lord our God, and we know not with what we must serve the Lord until we come thither."

But this was too much for Pharaoh. It meant losing his best servants, and all their belongings, too, and he thought he would rather endure the darkness than give in to that. So he shouted to Moses:

"Get thee from me; take heed to thyself, see my face no more, for in the day thou seest my face thou shalt die."

And Moses answered:

"Thou hast spoken well; I will see thy face again no more."

For he felt that now the end was coming fast. Then spoke the Lord to him:

"Yet one more plague will I bring upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go hence: when he shall let you go, he shall surely thrust you out hence altogether."

By this time Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and, indeed, in the sight of all the people. They were mightily afraid of him. And now came the last and most dreadful punishment of all, the death of the first-born. The waters had been turned to blood, and the land had been vexed with frogs and lice and flies. A dreadful disease had smitten the cattle, and boils had broken out upon man and beast. The hail had come beating down upon the country and spoiling the crops, and after the hail had followed the locusts, devouring every green thing that was left upon the earth; until now the whole country was plunged in darkness and despair. But still Pharaoh had not given in, and still he would not until the sign came from God that even he could not disobey. Moses warned him, but in vain.

He spoke to the king in hot anger, saying:

"Thus saith the Lord, 'About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt; and all the first-born in the land of Egypt shall die (that meant the eldest child in every house), from the first-born of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne even unto the first-born of the maid-servant that is behind the mill; and all the first-born of cattle. And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there hath been none like it, nor shall be like it any more. But against any of the Children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast:' that ye may know that the Lord hath put a difference between the Egyptian and Israel."

I wonder Pharaoh did not hurry the Hebrews out of his dominions when he heard these dreadful words, but he was

determined to have his own way, and perhaps he did not believe them.

Moses and Aaron hastened away from the obdurate king, back to their own people, for they had much to say to them. The Lord their God had instructed them in all that they were to do, from the first thing to the last, and had even remembered that they would be hungry in their long journey and must eat just before starting. So when all the congregation of the Children of Israel had been called together, Moses proceeded to tell them what it was the Lord's will that they should do. On the tenth day of the next month the head of each house was to pick out a lamb from his flock, and if any man's family was too small to eat up a whole lamb at once, then he was to share it with some other small household. This lamb was to be kept for four days and then killed at evening, and the door-posts and lintel of each house were to be smeared with its blood.

In the night they were to roast the lamb, and eat it with bitter herbs and unleavened bread, and any scraps that were left when their hunger was satisfied, were to be burnt. And this meal was to be eaten in haste, just before they started out of Egypt; to be eaten with their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, and their staffs in their hands, for this was the Lord's *passover*. While the Israelites were cooking and eating their lambs, the Angel of the Lord would pass through Egypt, killing all the first-born of the land, except in the houses where the door-posts were smeared with the blood. He would recognize them for Hebrew dwellings, and *pass over* them. And this day was to be unto the Hebrews for a memorial, and they were to keep it a feast to the Lord unto all generations when they should come to the land which the Lord had promised them. And in that far-off day, when their children

should ask them, "What mean ye by this service?" they should answer, "It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover, who passed over the houses of the Children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians and delivered our houses."

And the Children of Israel did as Moses and Aaron commanded. At sunset on the fourteenth day, each household killed its lamb, and dipped bunches of hyssop in its blood, with which they marked the door-posts and lintels of their houses. And then each family stayed within its own doors, eating this last meal in Goshen, and waiting every moment the signal to depart. Suddenly in the midst of the night there arose a great cry throughout all Egypt, for in each house, from where Pharaoh sat on his throne to where the captives groaned in his dungeons, the first-born child lay dead.

And messengers came hurrying from the King to Moses, saying:

"Rise up, get you forth from among my people, both ye and the Children of Israel, and go, serve the Lord as ye have said. Take both your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone."

"And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, to send them out of the land in haste; for they said, 'We be all dead men.' "

And the Hebrews took the dough of the bread they were making before it was leavened (or risen), and bound their kneading troughs up with their clothes on their backs, and departed in great haste. And the Egyptians were so anxious to get rid of them that they gave them jewels of silver and jewels of gold and raiment to carry with them, as the Lord had said unto Moses, when he first spoke to him in Midian.

And so at last the Children of Israel left the land of

Egypt, where they had lived. They went forth, with their wives and their little ones, to seek the home which the Lord had promised them, trusting to the two men the Lord had sent them to lead them on their way.

CHAPTER XI

THROUGH THE WILDERNESS

The first stage of the journey of the Children of Israel was from Rameses to Succoth. There were about six hundred thousand (600,000) men and women, besides the children, and a mixed multitude went up with them; flocks and herds, even very much cattle. And on the way they ate only unleavened bread, for it was all they had had time to bring with them. And Moses bade the people:

"Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage."

Now, the shortest way from Egypt to Canaan would have been through the land of the Philistines, but they were a warlike people and would probably have blocked the Hebrews' path, so Moses led them a long way around by the Red Sea and the Wilderness. The Israelites were armed and they carried with them the bones of Joseph, as you remember he had commanded them to do when he was dying. From Succoth they went to Etham, where they encamped on the edge of the wilderness, "and the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; that they might go by day and by night: the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night departed not from before the people."

Meanwhile, Pharaoh had somewhat recovered from his first terror and had commenced to regret that he had let

the Hebrews go, and when he sent spies after them, and found that they had taken their way into the wilderness, he made up his mind to go after and force them to come back. So he "made ready his chariot and took his people with him: and he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt and captains over all of them . . . and he pursued after the Children of Israel," for the Children of Israel had gone out from his country "with a high hand" and that made him angry. When he caught up with the Hebrews they had already reached the Red Sea, and were encamped near it at a place called Phihahiroth, and Pharaoh said in his heart: "They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in," and he marched boldly down upon them. Now they, poor creatures, had never dreamed that the Egyptians would pursue them, and when they lifted up their eyes and saw Pharaoh drawing nigh, they were sore afraid, and they cried out unto the Lord. Then in their terror they turned on Moses with bitter reproaches.

"Because there were no graves in Egypt," said they, "hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to bring us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we spoke unto thee in Egypt, saying, 'Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it were better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness."

But Moses answered calmly:

"Fear ye not: stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will work for you to-day: for the Egyptians which ye have seen to-day ye shall see again no more forever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace."

And at his words the Israelites ceased murmuring and took courage. Then the pillar of cloud, which up to this

time had gone before them, moved slowly around until it was between their camp and the camp of the Egyptians; and there was the cloud and the darkness, yet gave it light by night, and one camp came not near the other all night.

And Moses stretched forth his hand over the Red Sea, and a strong east wind sprang up and divided the waters, and made the sea dry land, and Moses led the Children of Israel into the midst of the sea, and they walked upon dry ground; and the waters were a wall upon their right hand and upon their left. "And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots and his horsemen." And it came to pass in the morning watch that the Egyptians found that the sand was becoming wet under the chariots, so that the wheels sank in and drove heavily, and when they tried to hurry, the wheels dragged still deeper and were even wrenched off. Then they were frightened, and cried:

"Let us fly from the face of Israel: for the Lord fighteth for them against the Egyptians."

But it was too late, for now the Israelites had reached the other shore, and as the morning dawned Moses stretched forth his hand once more, and the sea returned in its strength. The Egyptians turned to fly, but the waters overthrew them as they ran. Now it reached to their knees, now it rose to their waists, and in another moment it had covered the chariots and horsemen, even all the host of Pharaoh that went in after the Israelites into the sea; there remained not so such as one of them. "Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea-shore." Then the people feared the Lord, and believed in him, and in his servant Moses, and they sang a great song of triumph as they stood safe on the further shore.

SONG OF TRIUMPH OVER PHARAOH

"I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously:
The horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea.
The Lord is my strength and song,
And He is become my salvation:
This is my God, and I will praise Him;
My fathers' God, and I will exalt Him.
The Lord is a man of war:
The Lord is His name.
Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath He cast into the sea:
And his chosen captains are sunk in the Red Sea,
The deeps cover them:
They went down into the depths like a stone . . . . . .
The flood stood upright as an heap;
The deeps were congealed in the heart of the sea.

The enemy said,
'I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil;
My lust shall be satisfied upon them;
I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.'

Thou didst blow with Thy wind, the sea covered them:
They sank as lead in the mighty waters.
Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods?
Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness,
Fearful in praises, doing wonders?"

And Miriam, Aaron's sister, who was a prophetess, or holy woman, took a timbrel in her hand (a timbrel was something like a tambourine, I believe), and led all the Israelitish women out after her with timbrels and with dances, singing in answer to the men:

"Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously;
The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea."

I cannot help being a little sorry for the Egyptians, can you, and wishing that the Hebrews had shown a little pity for them in their song? But those were harder days than ours, and the Hebrews thought only of the slavery they had escaped.

However, their trials were not yet nearly over, for between them and the Promised Land stretched the great wilderness. Their first trouble came from thirst. Moses had led them three days' journey from the Red Sea when they came to a spring where they hoped to find water to drink, and behold, it had turned bitter, and from that day to this that place has been known as Marah, which means bitterness. Then the people, who were always distrustful and ungrateful, murmured against Moses, saying:

"What shall we drink?"

And he prayed the Lord for counsel. And the Lord showed him a tree, and he cast it into the spring and the waters were made sweet. So that danger was overcome.

Then they moved on to Elim, where there were twelve springs of water, and three-score and ten palm trees, a beautiful place where they found rest and refreshment, which they sorely needed afterwards, for the next stage of their journey was through the wilderness of Sin, a dry and barren place, where they found little to drink and nothing at all to eat. And, as usual, all the people turned upon Moses and Aaron, saying:

"Would that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots, when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness to kill the whole assembly with hunger."

I really wonder sometimes that Moses and Aaron did not run away and leave the people to their fate, but they were very patient, and thought more of obeying God themselves than of complaining of the people in their charge.

This time, as before, Moses prayed for help, but he and Aaron warned the Children of Israel:

"The Lord heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against him: and what are we? Your murmurings are not against us, but against the Lord."

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying:

"At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread, and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God."

Moses repeated this to the Israelites, and it came to pass at even that a flock of quails came up and covered the camp, and they brought them down with their bows and arrows until there was enough for all to eat. And in the morning, when they went out, the dew lay round about the camp. "And when the dew was gone up, behold, a small round thing, small as the hoarfrost on the ground. And when the Children of Israel saw it, they said to one another, 'What is it?' for they wist not what it was." And Moses said unto them:

"It is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat" (for God had said to Moses, "I will rain bread from Heaven for you"). . . . . "Gather ye of it every man according to his eating, an omer a head; according to the number of your persons shall ye take it, every man for them which are in his tent." And the Children of Israel did so, and gathered some more, some less.

And Moses said to them:

"Let no man leave it till the morning."

Notwithstanding it, they hearkened not to Moses, but some of them left it until morning, and then they found the worms were eating it, and Moses was angry with their disobedience.

And every morning they went out and gathered this wonderful bread, except on Sunday morning, for on Satur-

day they gathered enough for two days, that they might rest on Sunday. And strangely enough, it was only on Saturdays that they could keep the bread over for more than one day. And they lived for years on this bread, "and the house of Israel called the name thereof Manna, and it was like coriander seed, white; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey."

We hear of no more trouble from this time until the Israelites reached Rephidim, and there again they could find no water, and came near dying of thirst. And they demanded help of Moses, saying:

"Give us water that we may drink."

And he could only answer:

"Why strive ye (or quarrel ye) with me? Wherefore do ye tempt (or provoke) the Lord?"

But the thirst of the people increased, and they complained loudly, asking Moses the old question:

"Wherefore hast thou brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?"

And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying:

"What shall I do unto this people? They be almost ready to stone me."

And the Lord told Moses to take his rod, that had already worked so many miracles, and smite upon a rock in Horeb, near by, and he did so, passing on before the people and taking the elders of Israel with him. And when he struck the rock the water gushed forth in a great stream, until there was more than enough for all the people.

After this they fell in with the people of Amalek, who were a fierce tribe, and insisted on fighting them. The Israelites went to the battle led by a young captain called Joshua, the son of Nun, and they defeated altogether Amalek and his party, and from this time Joshua became

the leader of the Israelites whenever there was any fighting to be done.

All this time Moses's wife and his two children, Gershom and Eliezer, had been living at home with Jethro, the Priest of Midian, to whom Moses had sent them for safe keeping at the beginning of the troubles in Egypt. And now when Jethro heard that Moses was in the wilderness not far from him, he took Zipporah and her two sons and came to the mount of God, where the Israelites were encamped, and he said to Moses:

"I thy father-in-law am come unto thee, and thy wife and her two sons with her."

"And Moses went out to meet his father-in-law and did obeisance and kissed him; and they asked each other of their welfare; and they came into the tent. And Moses told his father-in-law all that the Lord had done unto Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, all the travail that had come upon them by the way, and how the Lord delivered them." And Jethro said:

"Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods. Blessed be the Lord."

And he took a burnt-offering and sacrifice for God; and Aaron came, and all the elders of Israel, to eat bread with Moses's father-in-law before God.

And the next morning Jethro saw the great crowds of people who came to ask Moses to decide between them in their quarrels, and to lay down the law for them, and he asked:

"What is this thing that thou doest to the people? Why sittest thou thyself down, and all the people stand about thee from morning unto even?"

And Moses answered:

"Because the people come unto me to inquire of God: when they have a matter they come unto me; and I judge

between a man and his neighbor, and I make them know the statutes of God, and his laws."

But Jethro, who was a very wise old man, saw that Moses was trying to take too much work upon himself, and he said to him:

"The thing that thou doest is not good. Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that is with thee: for the thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone. Hearken now unto my voice. I will give thee counsel, and God be with thee."

Then he advised Moses to choose from among his followers "able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating unjust gain," and place them over the people, as rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties and rulers of tens, and let them judge the people at all seasons.

"And it shall be," said Jethro, "that every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge themselves; so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee."

And Moses saw that his father-in-law was right, and he appointed judges as he had advised, and after that Jethro went back to his own home. I have told you about his visit, children, because I want you to remember the advice he gave Moses. In this world it is a good thing to work for one's self, but it is a great thing to be able to direct others how to work and to let them share the burden with one.

And now the Children of Israel were drawing near to Mount Sinai, the mount of God. Indeed, they were encamped under the shadow of it, and the mountain must have looked to them just as it would to us to-day, if we were journeying across the desert from Egypt to the Holy Land. I have never seen Mount Sinai, but those who have say that it is one of the strangest-looking places in the

world. There are no hills near, only the barren, sandy desert on every side, and the mountain stands out by itself in the clear atmosphere to rest the eye of every traveler in that flat country. There are rocky ravines, or cracks, running up into its sides, but no vegetation until you go around on the other side of the route of the Israelites, and there you will find a little fertile shelf in the mountain-side, where there are springs of water and green grass and trees. A Carmelite convent stands there now, and has for years past, but it is doubtful whether the Israelites ever even saw this little green spot in their weary journeying, for if they had, they surely would have rested there, and we find no mention of any such place in the Bible. But what gives the mountain its peculiar appearance is that the air about its summit is so dry that no rain or snow falls there, although it is often hidden in clouds, and the lightning flashes through them and the thunder rolls about the mountain-top.

It was here that Moses heard from God the great laws which he gave to the people, and which they passed on to their children, and their children taught to all the nations of the world, until they have come down to our day, and are know to us as the Ten Commandments.

When they had come this far on their journey, the Lord told Moses that He was going to make the Children of Israel "a peculiar treasure unto Him from among all peoples, that they should be unto Him a kingdom of priests and an holy nation; and here He bade him tell the people that He, the Lord, should give them His commandments on the third day from that time, and to make themselves ready by sanctifying themselves and washing their garments. And it came to pass on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the Mount, and the voice of a trumpet exceed-

ing loud; and all the people that were in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet God; and they stood at the nether part of the Mount. And Mount Sinai was altogether on smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole Mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet waxed louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by a voice. And the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, to the top of the Mount: and the Lord called Moses to the top of the Mount; and Moses went up," and there God taught him all that he needed to know in order to lead His people.

You all know the Ten Commandments which he received there, but there were others which he heard from God also at this time, which you may hear spoken of later as "the Book of the Covenant." And Moses went down from the Mountain and told the people all that he had heard, and they answered with one voice:

"All the words which the Lord God hath spoken will we do, and be obedient."

Then Moses went back to the mountain-top, taking Aaron with him, and others of the chief men and elders; "and they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and as it were the very heaven for clearance. . . . And they beheld God, and did eat and drink." Then the Lord told Moses to come still higher up on the Mount, and that there He would give him the tables of stone, with the laws or commandments written upon them, that he might always have them to teach the people. "And for six days the top of the mountain was covered with clouds, and the glory of the Lord abode upon it." And to the Children of Israel, waiting below, the appearance of the glory of

the Lord was like a devouring fire on the mountain heights.

"And Moses entered into the midst of the cloud, and went up into the Mount," and was there forty days and forty nights. You would grow very sleepy if I should try to tell you even a few of the laws which Moses made after this talk with God. A great many of them concerned a little house which he was to have built and carried before the Children of Israel on their journeyings, and which was to be called "The Ark of the Covenant." It was to hold all the relics and holy things that they had brought out of Egypt, and keep them safe until they reached the land of Canaan, when they could build a permanent temple or church for them. Aaron and his sons were to have especial charge of this ark, and Aaron was henceforth to wear a special kind of priest's dress, "holy garments, for glory and for beauty," and was to offer all the animals that should be sacrificed unto the Lord. All these and many other things did Moses hear from the Lord, and "when He had made an end of communing with him upon Mount Sinai, He gave unto Moses the two tables of the testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God."

Now what do you suppose the Children of Israel had been doing all these forty days and nights that Moses was communing with the Lord? At first they were awe-struck and waited patiently for him to descend from the mountain; but when day after day and night after night passed and he did not come, they began to lose faith and to think that he was dead and would never return. Then, as they were a childish and foolish people, they were frightened at being left in the wilderness without a leader, and their hearts turned back to the images which the Egyptians had worshiped, and which they had almost learned to worship themselves. And they gathered around Aaron, and said:

MOSES RECEIVING THE TABLETS OF STONE

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"Up, make us a god, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man which brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become of him."

And Aaron was afraid to disobey them. So he told them all, men, women and children, to bring him the golden rings which they had worn in their ears, and he melted them all together, and fashioned with a graving tool a golden calf. And this he set up in the midst of the people, saying:

"This is thy God, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt," and the silly creatures believed him, and built an altar before the image and brought sacrifices to his calfship, and held a feast in his honor.

When the Lord had finished talking to Moses, He said to him:

"Go, get thee down; for thy people which thou broughtest up out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves: they have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them; they have made them a molten calf, and have worshiped it and have sacrificed unto it. I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people."

"And Moses turned and went down from the Mount, with the two tables of testimony in his hand, tables that were written on both their sides." And Joshua came down with him, for he had waited near all the forty days. And as they approached the Israelites' camp they heard the people shouting, and Joshua said to Moses:

"There is a noise of war in the camp."

But Moses answered:

"It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome: but the voice of them that sing do I hear."

As they talked they hurried on, and it came to pass that as they drew near the camp they saw the calf and all

the people dancing around it. Then Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hand and brake them, and he ran forward and took the calf which they had made, and burnt it with fire and ground it to powder, and strewed it upon the water, and made the Children of Israel drink of it.

Then he turned on Aaron sternly, saying:

"What did the people unto thee, that thou hast brought a great sin upon them?"

And Aaron commenced to apologize:

"Let not the anger of my lord wax hot," said he; "thou knowest the people that they are set on evil. For they said unto me, 'Make up gods which shall go before us: but as for this Moses . . . . . we know not what is become of him.' And I said unto them, 'Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off,' so they gave it to me; and I cast it into the fire, and there came forth this calf."

Then Moses saw that the people had gone too far to listen to reason, and that if he still meant to be their leader he must exert his authority by force, and he called out loudly:

"Whoso is on the Lord's side, let him come unto me;" and all the sons of Levi gathered about him.

Then he commanded:

"Put ye every man his sword upon his thigh, and go to and fro from gate to gate throughout the camp;" and the fight commenced. It was long and bitter, and at the end three thousand men lay dead; but Moses had conquered, and henceforth no one dared disobey him.

On the next day he called all the people together and made a speech to them.

"Ye have sinned a great sin," he said at the end of his speech, "and now I will go up unto the Lord; peradventure I shall make atonement for your sin;" and then he prayed, and said:

"Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if Thou wilt, forgive them their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written."

And for Moses's sake the Lord forgave the people, and told Moses to lead them on to the place of which He had spoken unto him, and that His angel should go before them on the way. And the people stripped themselves of their ornaments, there in Horeb, as a sign of repentance and contrition; and that day they saw the pillar of cloud stand at the door of Moses's tent, while "the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend;" and they stood, every man in his tent door, and worshiped, but only Joshua went in with him. And early the next morning Moses went up to Mount Sinai, and the Lord gave him two new tables of stone, to take the place of those that had been broken. And He taught Moses one of those beautiful songs, which Moses afterwards taught to the people:

"The Lord, the Lord, a God full of compassion and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin; and that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation."

And when Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tables in his hands he "wist not that the skin of his face shone by reason of his speaking with Him (the Lord). And when Aaron and all the Children of Israel saw Moses, behold the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him. And Moses called unto them, and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him, and he gave them in commandment all that the Lord had

spoken on Mount Sinai. And when Moses had done speaking with them, he put a veil on his face." And just here I must stop to tell you that in some of the translations of the Bible, instead of saying that Moses's "face shone," they say that it "sent forth beams or *horns* of light," and so some of the old pictures and statues of Moses portray him with little *horns* on his forehead. There is one very famous statue of him, by a great artist called Michel Angelo, where you can see them very distinctly.

But to go on with our story. The Israelites lived some time near Mount Sinai, in the rocky pass of Horeb, while they were building the ark of the covenant under Moses's direction; but at last it was finished, as the Lord had commanded, and they were able to go on with their journey as before, only now the ark went in front of them all, and the pillar of cloud rested on it by day, and by night "the glory of the Lord" shone forth from it as a light to guide them on their way. When the ark set forward in the morning Moses would say:

"Rise up, O Lord, and let Thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate Thee flee before Thee!"

And when it rested in the evening, he said:

"Return, O Lord, unto the ten thousands of the thousands of Israel!"

And if by any chance the pillar of cloud or the light were absent from the ark, they set it down and rested at the place where they were until they could see them again. And Moses had two trumpets of beaten silver, by which he summoned the camp together, and a system of signals to warn them of any danger. And so they journeyed on for many years, and the worst of their troubles were over, although Moses still had much to contend with. His greatest difficulties came from the jealousy of others of the chief people in the camp. Once in particular Aaron and

his sister Miriam rebelled against him, and God punished Miriam by sending on her the terrible disease of leprosy, and she would have died if Moses had not prayed the Lord to forgive her and let her live. As it was, the whole camp had to wait seven days while she lay ill.

Through every trial Joshua was Moses's firm friend, though he was young and impetuous, and would often try his leader by being over-anxious to help him. Once they came near the country of the Nephilim or giants, the sons of Anak, and the Israelites "were in their own sight as grasshoppers compared to them," but as we hear no more of these interesting people, I think they must have thought it safer to go around their dominions than through them.

Another conspiracy was headed by one called Korah, a descendant of Reuben, who induced certain other men of his tribe to join with him against Moses, until they numbered two hundred and fifty altogether. They came to Moses and Aaron, saying:

"Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them; wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the assembly of the Lord?"

And when Moses heard them he fell upon his face, and he spoke unto Korah and all his company, saying:

"In the morning the Lord will show who are his, and who are holy. . . . . This do: take your censers, Korah and all his company, and put fire therein, and put incense upon them before the Lord to-morrow: and it shall be that the man whom the Lord doth choose, he shall be holy; ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi."

For he saw that they were moved solely by jealousy.

And the next morning they took every man his censer, and put fire in it, even as Moses had said, and stood at the door of the tent of meeting with Moses and Aaron. Then

the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the congregation, and the voice of the Lord was heard, saying:

"Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment."

And all the people arose and gat them up from the tabernacle of Korah, and he was left alone, standing at the door of his tent, with his followers, Dathan and Abiram, and their wives and their sons and their little ones.

And Moses said:

"Hereby ye shall know that the Lord hath sent me to do all these works: if these men die the common death of all men, then the Lord hath not sent me. But if the Lord make a new thing, and the ground open her mouth and swallow them up, with all that appertaineth to them, and they go down alive into the pit, then ye shall understand that these men have despised the Lord."

And it came to pass that as he made an end of speaking all these words, the ground clave asunder that was under them, and the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up, and they perished from among the assembly. And all Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of them; for they said, "Lest the earth swallow us up." And the rest of Korah's men were devoured by fire. So the Lord justified Moses.

At Kadesh Miriam died and was buried, and soon after, at Mount Hor, Aaron followed her; but before he died they stripped him of his priestly garments and put them upon Eleazer, his son, as a sign that he should succeed his father as priest. Aaron died on top of the mountain; and when Moses and Eleazer, who had been with him, came down alone, the people knew that he was dead; and they wept for him thirty days, even all the house of Israel.

From Mount Hor they went to the land of Edom, and "the soul of the people was much discouraged because of

the way," and they fell to complaining and murmuring again. They set up their old cry:

"Wherefore have ye brought us up out of the land of Egypt to die in the wilderness?"

They even turned on the manna which had sustained them so long.

"Our soul loatheth this light bread," they grumbled.

And as if they had not already brought trouble enough upon themselves, a whole army of snakes was sent to infest their camp, as a punishment for their complaints, so that many died of their bites; and to help them Moses made a serpent of brass and set it upon a standard, and it came to pass that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he looked upon the serpent of brass, he lived.

But at last they came out of the wilderness. They took possession of the first land they came to, which belonged to the Amorites, and which, if it were not the land "flowing with milk and honey," was still near by it. Here Joshua had plenty of work to do such as his soul loved, for in order to stay there they had to fight many battles with the Amorites and their neighbors in Bashan. They fought with the two rulers of these countries, King Sihon, and King Og of Bashan; and as Joshua was a very great general, they always won; and finally they were enabled to pitch their camp in the plain of Moab, beyond the Jordan at Jericho, which was just across the river from Canaan, the Promised Land.

CHAPTER XII

BALAAM

Now Balak, the son of Zippor, was king of Moab at this time, and when he heard of the victories Israel had gained over the Amorites he was sore afraid of that people, and was distressed because of them. And he called the chief men or princes of his kingdom together, and said, speaking of the Israelites who were encamped in the plains:

"Now shall this multitude lick up all that is around about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field."

And they consulted together as to what they should do, and finally decided to ask the help of a certain wise man and magician, called Balaam, the son of Beor, who was said to be very powerful. So King Balak sent as messengers the princes of Moab themselves to Pethor, on the river Jordan, where Balaam lived, telling them to say to him:

"Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt; behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me: come now, therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people; for they are too mighty for me: peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and I may drive them out of the land, for I know that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed."

And they departed with rich presents in their hands, and came to Balaam, and repeated to him the king's words. And he would only answer:

"Lodge here this night, and I will bring ye word again as the Lord shall speak unto me;" for he wanted time to

think before he decided what to do. So the princes of Moab abode with Balaam, and in the night he heard the voice of God speaking to him, asking:

"What men are these with thee?"

And he answered:

"Balak, the son of Zippor, the king of Moab, hath sent unto me, saying, 'Behold the people that is come out of Egypt, it covereth the face of the earth: now come, curse me them; peradventure I shall be able to fight against them, and shall drive them out.' "

And God said unto Balaam:

"Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed."

And Balaam rose up in the morning, and said unto the princes of Balak:

"Get you into your own land, for the Lord refuseth to give me leave to go with you."

And they returned to Balak, and told him:

"Balaam refuseth to come with us."

But the king would not take that for an answer. He sent "yet again princes, more and more honorable than they," higher dignitaries in the kingdom, telling them to go to Balaam and say:

"Thus saith Balak, the son of Zippor, 'Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming with me: for I will promote thee unto very great honor, and whatsoever thou sayest unto me I will do: now therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people.' "

But Balaam answered:

"If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold I cannot go beyond the words of the Lord my God, to do less or more." And he added: "Now, therefore, I pray you, tarry ye also here this night, that I may know what the Lord will speak unto me more."

And God came again in the night, and said to Balaam: "If the men be come to call thee, rise up, go with them; but only the word which I speak unto thee, that shalt thou do."

So Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab; and as he rode along, with his two servants behind him, suddenly his ass turned aside out of the way, and went into a field; and Balaam, seeing no reason for such behavior on the animal's part, smote her to turn her into the road again. She went on peaceably then a few yards until they turned into a narrow path that ran between two vineyards, having a fence on the one side and the other. There the poor ass saw what she had seen before, "the angel of the Lord standing in the way, with his sword drawn in his hand," and she was frightened, and threw herself against the wall, and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall; and he was angry with her, of course, as he could not see the angel, and struck her again. And again the unfortunate animal tried to obey her master, and staggered on until they came to a narrow place, where there was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left. And there she saw the angel once more, and this time, in sheer fright, she lay down under Balaam; and he, being dreadfully provoked by such an unwarranted proceeding, commenced to beat her with his staff. And the Lord opened the mouth of the ass, that is, enabled her to speak, and she said to her master:

"What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times?"

And Balaam answered furiously, in spite of his astonishment at hearing an animal talk:

"I would there were a sword in my hand, for now had I killed thee."

And his poor ass said, reproachfully:

"Am I not thine ass, upon whom thou hast ridden all thy life long unto this day? Was I ever wont to do so (like this) unto thee?"

And he commenced to be ashamed of his temper, and answered:

"Nay."

Then the Lord opened his eyes, and he, too, saw the angel standing in the way, with the sword drawn in his hand, and he bowed his head and fell on his face. And the angel said unto him very sternly:

"Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times? Behold, I am come forth for an adversary, because thy way is headlong before me: and the ass saw me, and turned aside before me these three times: unless she had turned aside from me, surely now I had slain thee, and saved her alive."

And Balaam answered, humbly:

"I have sinned; for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me: now, therefore, if it displeases thee, I will get me back again."

But the angel told him:

"Go with the men; but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak."

So Balaam went on with the princes of Balak, pondering deeply on what he had seen. We do not hear of any more conversation on the ass's part, and doubtless she returned to her accustomed silence. I do not know what conclusion Balaam came to as to the meaning of this strange adventure, but my own idea is that God meant to teach him humility by showing him that a poor animal like his ass could see more than was visible to his eyes, though he was the wisest man in the kingdom, and could also set him an example in self-control and patience.

At last they came to the city of Moab, where King Balak

was waiting for Balaam. The first words the king said were:

"Did I not earnestly send unto thee to call thee? Wherefore camest thou not unto me? Am I not able indeed to promote thee to honor?"

And Balaam answered him:

"Lo, I am come unto thee: have I now any power at all to speak anything? The word that God putteth in my mouth, that I shall speak."

But the king thought that, now Balaam was with him, he would do what he wanted and cast some sort of spell over the Israelites which would force them to leave his dominions; and the morning after Balaam's arrival he took him up to the high places of Baal, to a bare height, where he could see the utmost part of the people; and there Balaam had them prepare seven altars, and on each altar a bullock and a ram for sacrifice, and Balak and the princes of Moab and all the people stood around to hear him curse the Children of Israel. But when he started to speak the Lord put His own words into his mouth, and to the increasing anger and disgust of the listening crowd, he said slowly:

"From Aram hath Balak brought me,
The king of Moab from the mountains of the east:"
(He said) "Come, curse me Jacob,
And come, defy Israel.
How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed?
And how shall I defy, whom the Lord hath not defied?
For from the top of the rocks I see him (Israel),
And from the hills I behold him:
Lo, it is a people that dwell alone,
And shall not be reckoned among the nations.
Who can count the dust (or children) of Jacob,
Or number the fourth part of Israel?

Let me die the death of the righteous,
And let my last end be like his."

As he finished, Balak burst forth:

"What hast thou done unto me? I took thee to curse my enemies, and behold thou hast blessed them altogether!"

But Balaam answered only:

"Must I not take heed to speak that which the Lord putteth in my mouth?"

Balak suppressed by a great effort the furious words he was ready to speak, for he thought that he would try once again, and see whether he could not prevail on Balaam to curse his enemies. So he said to him:

"Come, I pray thee, with me unto another place, from whence thou mayest see them (the Israelites)," and they all went to the top of Mount Pisgah, where there were seven more altars, with bullocks and rams standing ready near them; and here Balaam spoke again, but what he said was even more aggravating than before to the king and his people. I will not repeat all his words, but you can tell his meaning. He said:

"God is not a man, that he should lie,
Neither the son of a man, that he should repent."
"Behold, I have received commandment to bless:
And He hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it.
He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob,
Neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel. . . .
God bringeth them forth out of Egypt:
He hath as it were the strength of the wild ox. . . .
He shall not lie down until he eat of the prey,
And drink of the blood of the slain."

When poor Balak heard this, he said:

"Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all."

But Balaam answered as before:

"Told I not to thee, saying, 'All that the Lord speaketh, that I must do'?"

Then the king, who still had a little hope left, said:

"Come now, I will take thee unto another place; peradventure it will please God that thou mayest curse me them from thence."

And this time they went to the top of Mount Peor, that looketh down upon the desert; where they found again the indispensable seven altars and the bullocks and rams. All the people trembled with eagerness to hear what Balaam would say. This time his song was longer than ever, too long for me to give it all, and as before, it was entirely in honor of the Children of Israel.

"How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob," he cried,
"Thy tabernacle, O Israel!
As valleys are they spread forth,
As gardens by the river-side. . . .
His kingdom shall be exalted,
He shall eat up the nations, his adversaries,
And shall break their bones in pieces,
And smite them through with his arrows. . . .
Blessed be every one that blesseth thee,
And cursed be every one that curseth thee."

Then Balak's anger was indeed kindled against Balaam, and he smote his hands together, as he shouted:

"I called thee to curse mine enemies, and behold, thou hast altogether blessed them these three times. Therefore now flee thou to thy place: I thought to promote thee to great honor; but lo, the Lord hath kept thee back from honor."

But Balaam answered as calmly as before:

"Spake I not also unto thy messengers, saying, 'If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord, to do either good or bad of

my own mind; what the Lord speaketh, that will I speak'?" And now, behold, I go unto my people. Come, and I will advertise (or warn) thee what this people (the Israelites) shall do to thy people in the latter days."

And amid the awed silence of the king and his people, he made a solemn prophecy, or told what would happen in after years.

"There shall come forth a Star out of Jacob," he said,
"And a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel,
And shall smite through the corners of Moab,
And break down all the sons of tumult."

And he named the other countries which the Children of Israel should conquer, Edom and Seir and Amalek and Kain, until far, far in the future he saw them all being carried away captive by the great Assyrian power, which also in its turn should come to destruction. And he ended sadly:

"Alas, who shall live when God doeth this?" and turned to go and back to his own home. And Balak did not try to detain or molest him, but went his own way sorrowing, and all his people with him.

CHAPTER XIII

JOSHUA SUCCEEDS MOSES

During this time the Children of Israel were encamped in the plains of Moab, where Moses, who felt that he had not much longer to live, occupied himself in taking the number and names of his people, dividing them into tribes and families, enforcing on their minds the laws he had learned on Mount Sinai, and teaching them new rules that should help them to govern themselves when they had reached the Promised Land, and he was no longer near to instruct them.

At intervals the Moabites and Midianites came out to do battle, but the Israelites held their own against them, and maintained their position on the plains.

Many good and useful things Moses taught his people, giving them some of the best rules for life the world has ever known.

"And now, Israel," he said in summing up his instructions, "what doth the Lord thy God require of thee but to fear Him, to walk in all His ways, to love Him and to serve Him with all thy heart and with all thy soul, to keep His commandment and His statutes?"

And he told them:

"Thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God, and the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, out of all the peoples that are upon the face of the earth;" and from this the Hebrews came to be called "the chosen people."

He assured them that very soon they were to pass over Jordan, but warned them that it was not because of their own righteousness or uprightness of heart that they were going to possess the land of Canaan, but only by the favor of the Lord, and he gave them his blessing in these beautiful words:

"The Lord bless thee and keep thee:
The Lord make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:
The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace."

Then because he was anxious not to leave this childish people without any guide, he went away from them, and prayed, saying:

"Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation, which may go out before them, and which may come in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may lead them in; that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd."

And the Lord answered Moses:

"Take thee Joshua, the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him; and set him before Eleazar the priest and all the congregation, and give him a charge in their sight. And thou shalt put of thine honor upon him, that all the Children of Israel may obey him."

So Moses went back gladly to the people, and told them that after his death Joshua was to be their guide and general.

It was in these days that the tribes of Reuben and Gad came to him, and told him that they liked so well the land of Gilead, where they were then encamped, that they would prefer to build cities there and make that their home,

instead of crossing over the river with the rest of their brethren; and Moses gave them permission to keep the land, on condition that they would continue with the rest of the Israelites until they were fairly settled in Canaan, to be ready to give aid in case they had to fight for their new home.

At last Moses heard the voice of God telling him that the day approached when he must die, and he was sad at heart because he could not himself live to lead his beloved people into the land flowing with milk and honey. It was forty years since they had left Egypt, and they had gone through many dangers and hardships together; and now, just as the hour of their victory was reached, he must die, and leave them to enjoy it without him. But he had learned long, long ago to submit without complaining to the will of God, and he made his final preparations bravely. To his good friend Joshua he gave a charge, as the Lord had commanded, bidding him:

"Be strong and of a good courage; for thou shalt bring the Children of Israel into the land which I sware unto them: and I will be with thee."

And to the priests or Levites he said, giving them the book in which he had written God's commandments:

"Take the book of the law, and put it by the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God."

And he warned them:

"Behold, while I am yet alive with you, ye have been rebellious against the Lord: and how much more after my death! Ye will do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger through the works of your hands."

And to all the people he spoke solemnly:

"Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify unto you this day. For it is no vain thing for you, because

it is your life, and through this thing ye shall prolong your days upon the land, whither ye go over Jordan to possess it."

Then, having finished all he had to do, he went up from the Plain of Moab to the top of Mount Pisgah, which is over against Jericho, where he could look down on the Promised Land spread out before him. Here he could see "all the land of Gilead unto Dan; and all Napthali, and the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah unto the western sea; and the South and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees unto Zoar."

And the Lord said unto him as he gazed:

"This is the land which I sware unto Abraham, unto Isaac and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy children: I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither."

"So Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there in the land of Moab, and was buried in the valley over against Beth-peor; but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day." And though Moses was an old man when he died, the Bible says a hundred and twenty, "his eye was not dim nor his natural force abated." And the Children of Israel wept for him thirty days, and then they turned to Joshua as their leader, and he was full of the spirit of wisdom, and they hearkened unto him and obeyed him as Moses had commanded.

"And there hath not arisen a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face; in all the signs and wonders which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants, and to all his land; and in all the mighty hand, and in all the great terror, which Moses wrought in the sight of all Israel."

"Now it came to pass after the death of Moses, the

servant of the Lord, that the Lord spake unto Joshua, saying:

" 'Moses, my servant, is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou and all his people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the Children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, to you have I given it, as I spake unto Moses. From the wilderness, and this Lebanon, even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your border. There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so will I be with thee: I will not fail thee nor forsake thee. . . . Only be strong and very courageous, to observe to do according to all the laws which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest deal wisely whithersoever thou goest. The book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate thereon day and night. . . . Be strong and of a good courage. Have not I commanded thee: be not affrighted, neither be thou discouraged: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.' "

And Joshua gave instructions to his officers, saying:

"Pass through the midst of the camp, and command the people, saying, 'Prepare ye victuals, for within three days ye are to pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the Lord your God hath given you.' "

And he spoke to the Reubenites and Gadites, saying:

"Remember the word which Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, saying . . . 'Your wives, your little ones and your cattle shall abide in the land beyond Jordan; but ye shall pass over before your brethren armed, all the mighty men of valor, and shall help them; until the Lord

hath given your brethren rest and they have possessed the land; then ye shall return unto the land of your promise and possess it.' "

And they answered:

"All that thou hast commanded us we will do, and whithersoever thou sendest us we will go. According as we hearkened unto Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto thee: only the Lord thy God be with thee as he was with Moses. Whosoever he be that shall rebel against thy commandment, he shall be put to death: only be strong and of a good courage."

So Joshua found that he had staunch followers.

The next day he picked out two brave men, and sent them as spies into the land whither they were going, telling them to inspect all the country, and particularly the city of Jericho. And they went to the city, and came to the house of a woman called Rahab, where they asked permission to rest for the night. But a rumor circulated about the town that they were there, and penetrated even to the king's palace, and some one said to the king:

"Behold, there came men in hither to-night of the Children of Israel, to search out the land."

Now the people in this part of the world dreaded above all things the coming of the Children of Israel, and the king sent messengers at once to Rahab's house, telling her:

"Bring forth the men that are come to thee, which are entered into thine house, for they be come to search out all the land."

But she would not let them in until she had taken the two men and hidden them under the stalks of flax that were laid in order upon her roof to be dried. Then she opened the door, saying:

"Yea, the men came unto me, but I wist not whence they were: and it came to pass about the time of the shut-

ting of the gates (that meant the gates of the city), when it was dark, that they went out: whither they went I wot not: pursue after them quickly, for ye shall overtake them."

So the king's messengers hurried away towards the fords of the river Jordan, hoping to catch the spies before they could get across, and the gates of the city were closed fast after them, to prevent the Israelites escaping, in case they had not really left the city. Then Rahab went softly up to the roof, and said to the men:

"I know that the Lord hath given you this land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you, when ye came out of Egypt, and what ye did unto the two kings, Sihon and Og. And as soon as we heard it our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more spirit in any man, because of you: for the Lord your God he is in heaven above and on earth beneath.

"Now therefore," she went on, "I pray you swear unto me by the Lord, since I have dealt kindly with you, that ye also will deal kindly with my father's house, and that ye will save alive my father and my mother, and my brethren and my sisters, and all that they have, and will deliver our lives from death."

And the two Israelites said to her.

"Our life for yours, if ye utter not this our business: and it shall be, when the Lord giveth us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with thee."

Then the woman let them down by a cord through the window: for her house was upon the town wall, and she dwelt upon the wall. And she said unto them:

"Get you to the mountain, lest the pursuers light upon you, and hide yourselves there three days, until the pursuers be returned; and afterward may ye go your way."

And they called back to her in a whisper:

"Behold, when we cross into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by: and thou shalt gather unto thee into the house thy father and thy mother, and thy brethren and all thy father's household. And it shall be that whatsoever shall go out of the door of thy house into the street, his blood shall be upon his own head, and we will be guiltless: and whosoever shall be with thee in the house, his blood be on our head, if any hurt be upon him."

And she said:

"According to your words, so be it."

And they departed, and she bound the scarlet thread in her window.

And the two men went to the mountain, as Rahab had advised them, and stayed hidden there for three days, until the pursuers were returned. Then they crossed quietly over the Jordan, without any mishap, and came safely to the camp, and told Joshua all that had happened to them, and how the inhabitants of the country were already so afraid of the Israelites that they were ready to melt away before them.

And Joshua, when he had heard their story, made a proclamation to the people, saying:

"Sanctify yourselves, for to-morrow the Lord will do wonders among you."

And he gave the priests orders that they should take up the ark of the covenant and go before the people towards the river: and he told both people and priests that "as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the Lord . . . shall rest in the waters of Jordan, the waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above, and they shall stand upon an heap."

And it all happened as he had said. The next day they started to cross Jordan, and as they approached the river, behold, it rolled away from them on either side, like the Red Sea when their fathers crossed it. The waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon an heap . . . and those that came down toward the sea of the plains, even the salt sea, failed and were cut off, and the people passed over on dry ground, right against Jericho.

And as a memorial of this great event, and of their coming at last to the Promised Land, Joshua picked twelve men out of each tribe, and ordered each one of them to carry a large stone on his shoulder from the middle of the river-bed, where they had crossed over, to the place on the other shore where they should lodge that night, and this heap of stones they called Gilgal, and it became a holy spot, famous through all the land. And here they rested while they kept the feast of the Passover, and ate the unleavened cakes and parched corn of the land, and from the time that they tasted this corn they found no more manna strewn in their path.

Now Jericho was straitly shut up because of the Children of Israel; none went out and none came in; and the Lord said unto Joshua:

"See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valor."

And He told him what he must do to conquer the city, and Joshua instructed his followers. The Israelites were about forty thousand men, ready armed, enough to win in fair fight, but on this occasion there was to be no battle.

Joshua ordered the people to form in a great procession, the armed men going first, then the priests with the ark, headed by seven of their number carrying trumpets of rams' horns, and behind them the gathering host of all the

people. They were to march around the city of Jericho. And he told them at the same time:

"Ye shall not shout nor make any noise with your voice until I bid you shout."

So in absolute silence, except for the braying of the rams' horns, the great army of Israelites compassed the doomed city, while the scared inhabitants watched them from the walls. This they did every morning for six days, but on the seventh day they rose up early, about the dawning of the day, and went around the walls seven times instead of once, and it came to pass at the seventh time, that the priests blew with the trumpets, and Joshua said unto the people:

"Shout; for the Lord hath given you the city; and the city shall be accursed, even it and all that are therein . . . only Rahab shall live, she and all that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent."

And he warned the people to bring all silver and gold, and vessels of brass and iron to the treasury of the Lord, and to keep themselves clear of the "accursed thing," for the Israelites were too fond of wealth ever to be trusted with it.

As he ceased speaking the priests blew with the trumpets, and the people shouted with a great shout, and at the mighty sound the walls of the city fell flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city. And they utterly destroyed all that was within the walls, both man and woman, young and old, and ox and sheep and ass, killing them by the edge of the sword.

But Joshua had said unto the two men that spied out the country:

"Go into Rahab's house and bring out thence the woman, and all that she hath, as ye sware unto her."

And they went in, and brought out Rahab, and her father and her mother, and her brethren, and all that she had, and all her kindred, and left them in the camp of Israel. And they burnt the city with fire, only saving the silver and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, which they carried to the treasury of the house of the Lord.

And Joshua saved Rahab and all her household, and treated them with kindness, and let them dwell the rest of their days with the Children of Israel; but he laid a curse upon any man who should attempt to rebuild the walls of Jericho.

So the Lord was with Joshua, and his fame was noised throughout all the country.

CHAPTER XIV

JOSHUA

After the capture of Jericho the Israelites fell into disgrace through the fault of one among them, a man called Achan, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah. He took of "the accursed thing," the spoils of the city, and instead of bringing his share to the treasury of the Lord, as Joshua had commanded, he hid it away to keep for himself.

Now just at this time Joshua sent up spies to inspect a neighboring city called Ai, and tell him how large a force would be needed to take it, and they returned, and said:

"Let not all the people go up, for there are but few in Ai. Let about two or three thousand men go up and smite the city."

So there went up thither of the people about three thousand men; and contrary to all expectation, the men of Ai fought so well that the Israelites fled before them, leaving thirty-six of their number dead in the field. And when they came back to the camp after their defeat, the hearts of the people melted and became as water, and Joshua rent his clothes and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark until the eventide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads. And Joshua said in his distress and humiliation:

"O Lord God, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? Would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side of Jordan! O Lord,

what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies? For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and what wilt thou do for thy great name?"

And the Lord answered Joshua, saying:

"Get thee up: wherefore liest thou upon thy face? Israel hath sinned, for they have taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff. Therefore the Children of Israel could not stand before their enemies. Up, sanctify the people against to-morrow, and call the tribes together, and in the morning he that is taken with the accursed thing shall be burnt with fire, because he hath transgressed the covenant of the Lord, and because he hath wrought folly in Israel."

So Joshua rose up early in the morning, and when the tribes assembled, by the Lord's inspiration he singled out that of Judah, and from Judah he separated the family of the Zerahites, man by man, and from the Zerahites he selected the household of Zabdi. And from the household of Zabdi he picked out Achan, the son of Carmi. And unto him he said:

"My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done: hide it not from me."

And Achan answered:

"Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done: When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment and two hundred shekels of silver and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them and took them, and behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it."

And Joshua sent messengers, and they ran unto the tent, and found the things where Achan had said, and they took them and brought them unto Joshua, and unto all the Children of Israel, and they poured them out before the Lord. And Joshua and all Israel with him took Achan, the son of Zerah, and the silver and the garment and the wedge of gold, and his sons and his daughters and his oxen and his asses and his sheep and his tent and all that he had, and they brought them out unto the valley of Achor. And Joshua said:

"Why hast thou troubled us? The Lord shall trouble thee this day."

And all Israel stoned Achan with stones, and burned him with fire after they had stoned them with stones. And they raised over him a great heap of stones . . . wherefore the name of the place was called the valley of Achor, unto this day.

After this dreadful punishment was accomplished, the Lord said unto Joshua:

"Fear not; neither be thou discouraged: take all the people of war with thee, and arise, go up to Ai. And thou shalt do to Ai and her king as thou didst unto Jericho and her king: only the spoil thereof and the cattle thereof shall ye take for a prey unto yourselves."

So Joshua chose out thirty thousand mighty men of valor, and sent them away by night, and he instructed them to form an ambush and lie in wait behind the city, and he told them to stay hidden until they should see him approaching with the rest of the army. Then, when the people of Ai sallied forth to meet Joshua and his party, who would pretend to be frightened and to fly before them, they, the thirty thousand, should rush out and capture the city and set it on fire, before the Aians had time to come back from pursuing the Israelites.

This is what we should call "a stratagem of war," and on this occasion it was successful. The thirty thousand men marched away by night, and Joshua followed them early next morning, with the remainder of the people, and when the King of Ai saw him approaching he called his subjects together and hastened out to meet him, thinking to win another easy victory over Israel. And Joshua and his soldiers "made as if they were beaten before them, and fled by the way of the wilderness, and all the people that were in Ai were called together to pursue after them, and were drawn away from the city. And there was not a man left in Ai,—they left the city open and pursued after Israel. And Joshua stretched out the javelin which he had in his hand as a signal, and the ambush arose quickly out of their place, and they ran into the city and took it, and hasted and set the city on fire. And when the men of Ai looked behind them, they saw, and behold, the smoke of the city ascended up to heaven, and they had no power to flee this way or that way; and the people that fled to the wilderness turned back upon the pursuers. And Joshua and all Israel knew by the smoke of the city that their plan had succeeded, and they turned and slew the men of Ai, and the thirty thousand men issued out of the city against them; so they were in the midst of Israel, some on this side and some on that side; and they smote them, so that they let none of them remain or escape. And the King of Ai they took alive and brought to Joshua, and I am sorry to say he had him hanged upon a tree until eventide, and then buried him under a great heap of stones at the city gates.

And the Israelites killed by the edge of the sword every one of the enemy that they found in the wilderness, and then marched into the city and slew the remainder of the wretched inhabitants. The only living things that they

spared were the cattle, which they wanted for themselves. And Joshua burnt Ai, and made it an heap for ever, even a desolation unto this day; and then he and his people went proudly back to their camp at Gilgal, and offered sacrifices of *peace* unto the Lord. For such was the custom in those times!

When the inhabitants of the neighboring kingdoms heard of the fate of Jericho and Ai, they were more than ever afraid of the Israelites, and the people of one country in particular came and sought humbly to make an alliance with them. These were the children of Gibeon, and Joshua promised them his protection, but only on condition that they would become hewers of wood and drawers of water for all the congregation of Israel,—that is, become the bondmen of the Chosen People. This was a hard fate, but perhaps it was better than what befell the other nations who tried to fight for their independence.

For it came to pass that when Adoni-zedek, the king of Jerusalem, heard how Joshua had taken Ai and utterly destroyed it, and how the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel, he feared greatly, and sent to four neighboring kings, saying:

"Come up unto me and help me, that we may smite Gibeon, for it hath made peace with Joshua and the Children of Israel."

And the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish and the king of Eglon, gathered themselves together and responded to his call. And all these five kings made war on Gibeon. And the men of Gibeon sent to Joshua in Gilgal, telling him of their danger, and saying:

"Come up to us quickly and save us and help us; for all the kings of the Amorites that dwell in the mountains are gathered together against us."

And Joshua hurried to their aid, with the people of war with him, all the mighty men of valor, and they journeyed by forced marches at night, and fell upon the Amorites unexpectedly, and defeated them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, and chased them along the way that goeth up to Beth-horon. And it came to pass as they fled before Israel, that great hailstones fell upon them from heaven, so large and so dangerous that they were more which died with hailstones than they whom the Children of Israel slew with the sword. And Israel pursued the enemy until nightfall, and for fear that some amongst them should escape under cover of the darkness, Joshua forbade the sun to go down.

"Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon," said he, "and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon."

And, wonderful to relate, "the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day. And there was no day like that before it or after it."

Then Joshua returned with all Israel unto their camp at Gilgal, but the five kings fled and hid themselves in a cave at Machdah. And when Joshua heard where they had gone, he said to his officers:

"Roll great stones upon the mouth of the cave, and set men by it for to keep them, and stay ye not, but pursue after your enemies and cut off the tail of them."

And he waited their return. Then when all the people came back to him in peace, he commanded:

"Open the mouth of the cave and bring forth *those* five kings unto me."

And when the poor wretches were dragged from their hiding place, he said to his men of war, to prove to them how utterly their antagonists were defeated and humiliated:

"Come near, and put your feet upon the necks of these kings."

And when his men of war had trampled upon the kings,

JOSHUA COMMANDING THE SUN AND MOON TO STAND STILL

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Joshua had them slain, and hanged them upon five trees all that day, for a warning to the people of the country, and at eventide they were cut down and buried in the cave where they had fled for refuge. These were such cruel days that I hate to tell you of them.

After this Joshua had to do battle with many more kings and cities, but as he always won, in time he had no one left to fight with, and there was peace in the land.

Then it was time to turn his attention to partitioning the conquered land among the Children of Israel, a work he did not enjoy half as much as fighting. The Lord said unto him:

"Thou art old and stricken in years, and there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed. . . . Divide thou it by lot unto the Israelites for an inheritance, as I have commanded thee," and Joshua had nothing to do but to obey. It was a long and tiresome task, but in time it was accomplished, and the different tribes were established, each in their own place. Reuben and Gad crossed over to the land they had chosen on the other side of Jordan, Ephraim went up to the mountains, as Joseph had decreed long before, and Judah settled round about Jerusalem. I do not think you need be troubled with the whereabouts of the other tribes.

"And it came to pass that a long time after the Lord had given rest unto Israel from all their enemies round about, that Joshua called for all Israel, the elders and the heads and the judges and the officers, and made them a solemn address, at a place called Shechem."

"Ye have seen," he said unto them, "all that the Lord your God hath done unto all these nations because of you: for the Lord your God is he that hath fought for you. Behold, I have divided unto you by lot all these nations that remain, to be an inheritance for your tribes, from

Jordan even unto the great sea westward. Be ye, therefore, very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses. Cleave unto the Lord your God, for He hath driven from before you great nations and strong: but as for you, no man hath been able to stand before you unto this day. Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the Lord your God. And behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth; and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you."

Then he reminded them of the care the Lord had had of them, since their first leaving Egypt even until now, when they were established "in a land for which they did not labor, in cities which they built not and yet dwell in, and eating of vineyards and oliveyards which they had not planted."

And he ended:

"Now, therefore, fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served in Egypt;" and the people answered:

"God forbid that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods."

And they swore:

"The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey."

And as a memorial of this promise, Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and took a great stone and set it up there under an oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord. And he said to the people:

"Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the Lord: it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God."

Then he let the people depart, every man to his inheritance.

"And it came to pass after these things that Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being an hundred and ten years old. And they buried him in Timnath-serah, which is in Mount Ephraim, on the north side of the hill."

Now only one thing remained for the Children of Israel to do, to bury the body of Joseph, which they had brought with them all the way from Egypt; and this they did finally in a parcel of ground which Jacob had bought in his lifetime of the sons of Hamor for an hundred pieces of silver, and which had become the inheritance of the descendants of Joseph.

CHAPTER XV

IN THE DAYS OF THE JUDGES

After Joshua's death the Children of Israel were governed by different leaders whom they called Judges, because they sat in judgment over the tribes in time of peace, and led them to battle when there was need to fight. Sometimes a woman was the Judge,—at least there is record of one who held the office.

The Israelites still had wars now and then with the neighboring peoples, and we hear of feuds between them and the Canaanites and Jebusites, and Hittites, and Moabites, and above all, of their battles with the Philistines.

EHUD

Their first serious trouble, after Joshua's death, came from Eglon, the king of Moab, who combined with the Children of Ammon and Amalek against Israel, and was so successful that the Children of Israel had to serve the Moabites for eighteen years. They were finally freed by a man of the tribe of Benjamin, called Ehud, a left-handed man; but when I think of the means he used to win freedom, I question if it would not have been better for the Hebrews to have remained slaves. He was sent to King Eglon with a very rich present from the Israelites, and before he started he hid under his raiment upon his right thigh a dagger which had two edges. Now Eglon is described to us as a very fat man. When Ehud had been shown into his presence and had made an end to offer the

gifts, he sent away the Hebrew servants who had carried them in for him, and said:

"I have a secret errand unto thee, O King."

And Eglon, being unsuspicious and good-natured, like most stout people, said:

"Keep silence," and sent away all the courtiers that stood around him. And he took Ehud with him into a summer-parlor which he kept for himself alone. And Ehud said:

"I have a message from God unto thee."

And when the poor king arose to hear what the message was, he took the dagger from his right thigh and thrust it into him with such a deep stroke that the haft (or handle) went in after the blade, so that he could not draw the dagger out again. Then he went forth through the parlor, and shut the doors of the parlor upon him and locked them, and escaped without any of the king's servants thinking to detain him. They waited and waited for their master to summon them, but they dared not disturb him, for when they saw that the doors of the parlor were locked they thought surely he was resting. And they tarried till they were ashamed to wait longer, and at last took a key and opened the doors, and behold, their lord was fallen dead upon the earth!

Ehud meanwhile had hurried back to Mount Ephraim, and had blown a trumpet to summon all the Children of Israel to him; and when they came from every quarter at the sound, he said unto them:

"Follow after me: for the Lord hath delivered your enemies, the Moabites, into your hand."

And they went down after him and took possession of the fords across Jordan, and crossed over and came down on the Moabites before they had recovered from their surprise and dismay at the death of their king. And the Israelites slew

about ten thousand men, all lusty and all men of valor, and subdued the country under the hand of Israel, and brought their bondage to an end.

Henceforth until his death Ehud was the chief man of Israel, and after him Shamgar, the son of Anath, was Judge, who, we are told, slew six hundred Philistines with an ox goad, a story I, for one, find it very hard to believe.

DEBORAH

The Hebrews prospered during the administration of these two men, but after Shamgar's death a powerful enemy arose against them in the person of Jabin, king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor, and who owed his success to a captain of his by the name of Sisera.

Israel at this time was judged by a woman called Deborah, a prophetess, and the wife of one Lapidoth. "And she dwelt under the palm trees, of Deborah in Mount Ephraim, and the Children of Israel came up to her for judgment," and they brought her stories of the terrible oppression of Sisera, of how he had nine hundred chariots of iron, and rode rough-shod over the country. And when she had listened to them she summoned to her a certain man named Barak, who dwelt at Kedesh, and said to him:

"Hath not the Lord God of Israel commanded, saying, 'Go toward Mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Napthali and the children of Zebulon, and I will draw unto thee to the river Kishon, Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thine hand.'"

And Barak answered:

"If thou wilt go with me, then I will go: but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go."

And Deborah said:

"I will surely go with thee," but she added, "the journey

that thou takest shall not be for *thine* honor, for the Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman."

So Deborah and Barak went to Kedesh, and there they called together the men of Zebulon and Napthali, and marched over to Mount Tabor. And when Sisera heard where they were, he called out all his nine hundred iron chariots, and all his soldiers, from his home at Harosheth, and started to meet them. And when he had come as far as the river Kishon, Deborah said to Barak:

"Up; for this is the day in which the Lord hath delivered Sisera into thine hand."

And Barak went down from Mount Tabor, with his ten thousand men behind him. And at the river the two forces met, and there was a mighty fight, which ended in the utter discomfiture of Sisera. He was so badly beaten that he lighted down from off his chariot, and fled away on his feet, while Barak pursued the rest of the chariots and army, even unto Harosheth of the Gentiles, "and all the host of Sisera fell upon the edge of the sword, there was not a man left."

Then Barak turned back to look for the great captain. But Sisera had hidden himself in the tent of Heber the Kenite. He had sought refuge there because Heber was at peace with Sisera's master, King Jabin, and when he approached the tent, Jael, Heber's wife, came out to meet him, saying:

"Turn in, my lord, turn in to me, fear not."

And when Sisera entered she covered him with a blanket, half to hide him, and half to make him comfortable. And he said to her:

"Give me, I pray thee, a little water to drink, for I am thirsty."

But she offered him better than water. She opened a bottle of milk and gave him to drink, and then she covered

him over again. And he told her to stand in the door of the tent, and if any one came past and inquired, saying, "Is there any one here?" to answer, "No." And then, as he was very weary from the battle and his long flight, poor Sisera fell fast asleep, and never heard Jael as she crept softly towards him.

When she was sure that he slept, Jael took the nail of the tent in one hand, and a hammer in the other, and smote the nail into his temple and fastened it into the ground, for she knew who Sisera was, and thought great glory would fall upon her if she could deliver her country's enemy into the hands of the Israelites. So he died.

And behold, as Barak passed the tent of Heber the Kenite, in pursuit of Sisera, Jael came out to meet him, and said:

"Come, and I will show thee the man whom thou seekest."

And when he came in, behold, Sisera lay dead, and the nail was in his temple; and Barak at that sight knew that the Israelites need fear no more the king of Canaan.

He went back at once to his victorious army with the news, and he and Deborah burst forth in one of those grand songs of triumph, which read so cruelly to us, in spite of their beauty. I will not give it all to you, but here is a part. Some verses Barak sang, and some Deborah, and some they both sang together.

"Hear, O ye kings; give ear, O ye princes," they began,
"I, even I, will sing unto the Lord.
I will sing praise to the Lord, the God of Israel.
In the days of Shamgar, the son of Anath,
In the days of Jael, the highways were unoccupied,
And the traveler walked through byways.
The rulers ceased in Israel, they ceased,

Until that I, Deborah, arose,
That I arose a mother in Israel.
My heart is towards the governors of Israel,
That offered themselves willingly among the people:
Bless ye the Lord:
Tell of it, ye that ride on white asses,
Ye that sit on rich carpets,
And ye that walk by the way.
Awake, awake, Deborah;
Awake, awake, utter a song!
Arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam.
Zebulon was a people that jeoparded their lives unto the death,
And Naphtali; upon the high places of the field.
The kings came and fought;
Then fought the kings of Canaan,
The stars in their courses fought against Sisera.
The river Kishon swept them away,
That ancient river, the river Kishon.
O my soul, march on with strength.
Then did the horsehoofs stamp,
By reason of the prancings, the prancings of their strong ones.
Blessed above women shall Jael be,
The wife of Heber the Kenite,
Blessed shall she be above women in the tent.
He asked for water and she gave him milk;
She brought him butter in a lordly dish.
She put her hand to the nail,
And her right hand to the workman's hammer;
And with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote through his head,
Yea, she pierced and struck through his temples.

At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay:
At her feet he bowed, he fell.
Where he bowed there he fell down dead.
Through the window she looked forth and cried,
The mother of Sisera cried through the lattice,
Why is his chariot so long in coming?
Why tarry the wheels of his chariots?
Her wise ladies answered her,
Yea, she returned answer to herself,
Have they not found, have they not divided the spoil?
A damsel, two damsels to every man;
To Sisera a spoil of divers colors,
A spoil of divers colors of embroidery;
Of divers colors of embroidery on both sides, on the necks of the spoil?
So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord:
But let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might."

GIDEON

The next enemies the Children of Israel had to contend with were the Midianites, or people of the desert, who encamped against them and destroyed the increase of the earth, and left no sustenance in Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass. For they came up with their cattle and their tents, they came in as locusts for multitude; both they and their camels were without number: and they came into the land to destroy it. And the Israelites were brought very low because of Midian, but did not lack a leader to save them in their dark hour. This time it was a young man called Gideon, the son of Joash, the Abi-ezrite, who lived with his father in Ophrah.

One day, when he was beating out wheat in the wine-press, to hide it from the Midianites, the angel of the Lord

came and sat under an oak near him, and opened conversation with him by saying:

"The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor."

Gideon did not know who this stranger might be, but there was something impressive in his appearance, and he answered, respectfully:

"Oh, my lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? And where be all his wondrous works which our fathers told us of, saying, 'Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?' But now the Lord hath cast us off, and delivered us into the hand of Midian."

And the angel looked upon him, and said:

"Go in this thy might, and save Israel from the hand of Midian."

But Gideon answered, modestly:

"Wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold, my family is the poorest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house."

And the angel said:

"Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man."

But Gideon hesitated, and at last begged:

"If now I have found grace in thy sight, then . . . depart not hence, I pray thee, until I come unto thee and bring forth my offering and lay it before thee."

And the angel answered:

"I will tarry until thou come again."

And Gideon went in, and made ready a kid and unleavened cakes of meal; the flesh he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot, and brought it out unto the stranger under the oak, and presented it.

And his strange guest said:

"Take the flesh, and the unleavened cakes, and lay them upon this rock, and pour out the broth."

And he did so. Then the angel of the Lord put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the food; and there went up fire out of the rock and consumed the flesh and the cakes; and the angel of the Lord departed or vanished out of Gideon's sight.

Then Gideon guessed with whom he had been conversing, and he was terribly frightened, for in Gideon's time they thought it meant death to receive a visit from one of God's angels; and he cried out:

"Alas, O Lord God! forasmuch as I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face."

And a voice from heaven answered him:

"Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die."

Then Gideon was glad at heart, and thankful for the angel's visit, and he built an altar to the Lord there where he had seen His messenger, and called the place Jehovah-shalom, which is to say, "The Lord is peace."

Now Gideon's father, Joash, had given in to the temptation that was always so strong to the Israelites, and had adopted the worship of false gods. He had built an altar to one called Baal, and put by it the wooden image of a goddess, Asherah, and it came to pass that that same night of the angel's visit, Gideon heard the Lord telling him to throw down the altar and to cut down the Asherah, and in their place to build an altar to the Lord God of Israel. And he took ten men of his servants, and did as the Lord had spoken unto him; and because he feared his father's household and the men of the city, he did it by night. And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was broken down, and the Asherah was cut down that was by it, and they said one to another:

"Who hath done this thing?"

And when they found that it was Gideon, they came to Joash, and said to him:

"Bring out thy son that he may die; because he hath broken down the altar of Baal and cut down the Asherah that was by it."

But Joash was not minded to give up his son.

"Will ye plead for Baal?" he said, "or will ye save him? He that will plead for him, let him be put to death: if he be a god let him plead for himself, because one hath broken down his altar."

And while the men of the city hesitated as to what they should do, an alarm came that the Midianites and Amalekites were assembling themselves together in the neighboring valley of Jezreel, and Gideon came forth and blew upon a trumpet and proclaimed himself the leader of an expedition against them, and the whole city there and then flocked to him.

And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh, and they also came after him; and Asher, and Zebulon, and Naphtali. And Gideon said unto God:

"If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast spoken, behold, I will put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor; if there be dew upon the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the ground, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by my hand."

And it was so: for he rose up early in the morning, and pressed the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowlful of water. And Gideon said unto God again:

"Let not thine anger be kindled against me, and I will speak but this once: let me prove, I pray thee, but this once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew."

And God did so that night: for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground.

So Gideon had confidence in the Lord, and he assembled

his forces and marched against the enemy, and established himself beside the spring of Harod, where they had the camp of the Midianites a little to the north of them; and here he proceeded to try his men, that he might keep only the bravest with him. He first made a proclamation, saying:

"Whosoever is fearful and trembling, let him return and go round about Mount Gilead."

And twenty-two thousand of the people took advantage of his permission, and went away, leaving only ten thousand with him. Then the Lord told him what he should do for a further test.

"The people are yet too many," He said to Gideon, "bring them down unto the water."

So he brought down the people unto the water, and the Lord said:

"Every one that lappeth the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself, likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink."

And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, was three hundred men; but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water.

And the Lord said to Gideon:

"By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand."

So the people took victuals in their hand, and their trumpets; and he sent all the men of Israel every man to his tent, but retained the three hundred men; and the camp of the Midianites was beneath him in the valley. And in the night the Lord spake to Gideon again, saying:

"Go thou with Purah, thy servant, down to their camp; and thou shalt hear what they say."

Then went he down with Purah, his servant, unto the uttermost part of the armed men that were in the camp. And the Midianites and Amalekites and Children of the East lay along in the valley like locusts for multitude; and their camels were without number, and when Gideon drew near, behold, a man was telling a dream he had had unto his fellow.

"I dreamed a dream," he said, "and lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian, and came unto the tent, and smote it that it fell, and turned it upside down, that the tent lay along."

And the other man answered:

"This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon, the son of Joash, a man of Israel: into his hand God hath delivered Midian and all the host."

And it was so that when Gideon heard the telling of the dream that he worshiped: and he crept back to the camp of Israel and woke his followers, saying:

"Arise, for the Lord hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian."

And he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put into the hands of them all trumpets, and empty pitchers, with torches inside the pitchers. And he said unto them:

"Look on me and do likewise: and behold, when I come to the uttermost part of the camp, it shall be that as I do, so shall ye do. When I blow the trumpet, I and all the men that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, 'For the Lord and for Gideon'."

Then they moved softly down upon the Midianites, and came upon the camp about the beginning of the middle watch of the night, when they had newly set the watch; and of a sudden they blew their trumpets on the three sides

and brake in pieces the pitchers that were in their hands, holding their torches in their left hands, and the trumpets in the right, and crying, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon."

At the mighty sound all the host ran out, and Gideon's men stood every man in his place, shouting louder and louder, until the Midianites, waked suddenly from their sleep, thought they were hemmed in by a great army on every side, and commenced to fight blindly in the dark, cutting down their own men more often than Gideon's, and at last in the confusion they all began to run, and fled toward Beth-shittah, toward Zererah. And Gideon sent swift messengers throughout the hill country of Ephraim, saying:

"Come down against Midian, and take the waters before them, even unto Jordan."

And they hastened to his summons, and got possession of all the fords before the Midianites, and took the two princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb; and they slew Oreb at the rock that was henceforth called after him the Rock of Oreb; and Zeeb they killed at the wine-press of that name; and they chased all Midian out of the country, and brought the heads of Zeeb and Oreb to Gideon, whom they found beyond Jordan. And when they caught up with him, the men of Ephraim said, grumbling because they had had no share in the battle:

"Why hast thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not, when thou wentest to fight with Midian?"

And Gideon soothed them with soft words.

"What have I now done in comparison with you?" he asked them. "Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abi-ezer? God hath delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb: and what was I able to do in comparison to you?"

Then their anger was abated toward him, when he had said that.

When Gideon had passed over Jordan, he and the three hundred men that were with him, faint yet pursuing, they had come to the country of the men of Succoth, and Gideon had said to them:

"Give, I pray you, loaves of bread unto the people that follow me; for they be faint; and I am pursuing after Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian."

But the people of Succoth were afraid of the Midianites, and would give no help to their enemies. Moreover, they did not believe that Gideon could catch the kings. So they answered him:

"Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hands, that we should give bread unto thine army?"

Then Gideon declared in fierce anger:

"When the Lord hath delivered Zebah and Zalmunna into mine hand, then I will tear your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers."

And he and his men hurried on to Penuel, where they made the same request of the inhabitants, and were answered in the same way. And to them Gideon said:

"When I come again in peace I will break down your tower."

Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in a place called Karkor, and with them were about fifteen thousand men, all that were left of the host of the Children of the East, and Gideon went around, and surprised them by falling upon them from the east, by the way of them that dwelt in the tents of Nobah, and he smote the host just as they believed themselves secure, and Zebah and Zalmunna, the two kings of Midian, fled away.

And Gideon pursued after them, and caught them, and he marched back with them in triumph through Penuel,

and slew the men of that city, and brake down their tower. Then he went on to Succoth, and said to all the inhabitants:

"Behold Zebah and Zalmunna, concerning whom ye did taunt me; saying, 'Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand, that we should give bread unto thy men that are weary?' "

And he took the elders of the city, seventy and seven men, and led them out into the wilderness, and there he taught them a terrible lesson with the thorns and briers, even as he had said.

And now, having finished with Penuel and Succoth, Gideon turned his attention to the unfortunate kings of Midian themselves, and said to them sternly:

"What manner of men were they whom ye slew at Mount Tabor?"

And they answered:

"As thou art, so were they; each one resembled the children of a king."

Then said Gideon:

"They were my brethren, the sons of my mother: as the Lord liveth, if ye had saved them alive, I would not slay you."

And he commanded his eldest son, Jether, saying:

"Up and slay them," meaning the royal prisoners, of course, but the youth drew not his sword; for he feared because he was yet a youth. And Zebah and Zalmunna said:

"Rise thou, and fall upon us, for as the man is, so is his strength."

And Gideon arose and slew them both, and kept the crescents that were on their camels' necks as a trophy of these unhappy kings.

When Gideon returned to his own home, the men of Israel came unto him and said:

"Rule thou over us, both thou and thy son, and thy son's son also: for thou hast saved us out of the hand of Midian."

But Gideon answered:

"I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the Lord shall rule over you."

And he said further:

"I would desire a request of you, that you would give me every man the earrings of his spoil." (For the Midianites had worn golden earrings.)

And they answered:

"We will willingly give them."

And they spread a garment, and did cast therein every man the earrings of his spoil, and their weight was a thousand and seven hundred shekels of gold; beside the crescents, and the pendants, and the purple raiment that was on the kings of Midian, and beside the chains that were about their camels' necks. And Gideon made a golden ephod or image of them. He meant it for the glory of the Lord, but in time he and his people came to worship it as a god in itself, and it became a snare to him and his house.

"So Midian was subdued before the Children of Israel, and they lifted up their heads no more, and the land had rest for forty years." And Gideon had three-score and ten sons, for he had many wives; and he died in a good old age and was buried in the sepulchre of Joash his father, in Ophrah of the Abi-ezrites.

And his son Abimelech succeeded him as the head of his house and leader of Israel, but during his time there was only fighting, first with his own brothers, all but one of whom he killed; and then with the people of the land, particularly the men of Shechem. Abimelech was generally victorious, but at last when he and his soldiers were besieging a city called Thebez, one of the women of the place cast an upper millstone upon his head from the tower where

her people had sought refuge, and broke his skull. And he had just strength enough left to call a young man near, his armor-bearer:

"Draw thy sword and kill me, that men say not of me, 'A woman slew him'."

And his young man thrust him through, and he died; and the Israelites themselves felt that the manner of his death was only a just reward for his behavior towards his brothers.

With him ends all we know of the family of Gideon.

JEPHTHAH

After this the Israelites had to contend with the Ammonites, who came out against them, and encamped in Gilead. The princes of Gilead met in council of war, saying to each other:

"What man is he that will begin to fight against the Children of Ammon? He shall be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead."

And Jephthah the Gileadite, a mighty man of valor, was the leader they fixed upon. He was a son of Gilead, but at this time was living in the wilderness of Tob, where he had acquired a great reputation for courage and daring; and they went out and found him and said:

"Come and be our chief that we may fight with the Children of Ammon."

But Jephthah answered:

"Did ye not hate me and drive me out of my father's house? And why are ye come unto me now that ye are in distress?"

And the elders said unto him:

"Therefore are we turned again to thee now, that thou mayest go with us and fight with the Children of Ammon, and thou shalt be our head over all the inhabitants of Gilead."

Then Jephthah made them promise:

"If ye bring me home again to fight with the Children of Ammon, and the Lord deliver them before me, shall I be your head?"

And they sware:

"The Lord shall be witness between us; surely according to thy word, so will we do."

So Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and chief over them; and the first thing he did when he found himself in command was to send a message to the king of the Ammonites, saying:

"What hast thou to do with me that thou art come unto me to fight against my land?"

And the king answered that he was come to win back certain lands that the Israelites had stolen from his fathers, when they passed through their country on their way from Egypt. Of course, this was only a pretext, and Jephthah told the king so very forcibly; but as he would not listen to anything the Israelites might say, Jephthah saw that there must be war. Then he vowed a vow unto the Lord, a very rash and foolish vow, saying:

"If thou wilt indeed deliver the Children of Ammon into mine hand, then it shall be that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace, it shall be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt-offering."

Of course, he thought it would be some favorite animal.

So Jephthah sallied forth against the enemy, and from the first he was successful in the fight, and he smote them with a very great slaughter, and took twenty of their cities, from Aroer until you come to the Meadow of the Vineyards. And when they were utterly subdued, he returned in great triumph to his house at Mizpah. But the noise of his victory had gone before him, and his household had made

great preparations to welcome him home, and when messengers came running in from the country round about to say that he was coming, behold, it was his little daughter Miriam who went out first to meet him. She came in greatest joy, with timbrels and with dances, leading all the house, but when Jephthah saw her, he rent his clothes, and cried out:

"Alas, my daughter!" for she was his only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter. And he said:

"Thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and cannot go back."

And then, as the child stood before him, bewildered and disappointed that he was not glad to see her, he told her of the dreadful vow he had made. And she answered with a courage that shamed him:

"My father, thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord; do unto me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth; forasmuch as the Lord hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, even of the Children of Ammon."

And her father gave her two months to prepare for death, and at the end of that time she came to him without a murmur, and he offered her for a sacrifice even as he had promised.

And it became a custom in the land for the daughters of Israel to lament four days of the year for the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite.

Jephthah continued at the head of the Gileadites, and led them out to war once more with the tribe of Ephraim. The Ephraimites seem to have been a quarrelsome set. They came to Jephthah, just as they had before to Gideon, and said:

"Wherefore passedst thou over to fight against the Children of Ammon and didst not call us to go with thee?"

And they expressed their intention of "burning his house with fire," in revenge for the slight.

But Jephthah gathered together all the men of Gilead and fought with Ephraim, and the Gileadites won, and took all the fords of Jordan. And it was so, that when any of the fugitives of Ephraim said, "Let us go over," the men of Gilead said unto him:

"Art thou an Ephraimite?"

If he said "Nay," then said they unto him: "Say now *Shibboleth*," and he said: *Sibboleth;* for he could not frame to pronounce it right; then laid they hold on him and slew him at the ford.

Jephthah judged Israel six years in all, six sad years they must have been for him. Then he died, though he was still a young man, and they buried him in one of the cities of Gilead.

CHAPTER XVI

SAMSON

About a quarter of a century after the death of Jephthah we first hear of the wars with the Philistines, who have come down to us in history as the chief enemy of the Chosen People. At this time we read that the Children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and were in consequence delivered into the hand of the Philistines for forty years, and had no peace until help came to them at last through the strong hand of Samson.

Towards the end of this forty years there lived in Zorah a certain man of the tribe of the Danites, Manoah by name, whose one great trouble was that he and his wife were without children. They had been married for many years when one day the angel of the Lord appeared unto the woman, and told her that her fondest hopes were to be realized, and that she was to have a son. And he gave her the singular command:

"No razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from his birth: and he shall begin to save Israel out of the hand of the Philistines."

A Nazarite meant one who is separated or especially consecrated to the service of God.

Then the angel disappeared, and the woman hastened to her husband to tell him the great news, saying:

"A man of God came unto me, and his countenance was like the countenance of the angel of God, very terrible: and I asked him not whence he was, neither told he me

his name, but he said unto me, 'Behold, thou shalt bear a son, and the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from his birth to the day of his death'."

And Manoah, when he heard his wife's story, entreated the Lord, and said:

"O Lord, I pray thee, let the man of God whom thou didst send come again unto us, and teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born."

And God hearkened to the voice of Manoah, and the angel of the Lord came again unto the woman as she sat in the fields; but Manoah her husband was not with her. And the woman made haste and ran, and told him, and said unto him:

"Behold, the man hath appeared unto me that came unto me the other day."

And Manoah arose, and went after his wife, and came to the man, and said:

"Art thou the man that spakest unto the woman?"

And he said:

"I am."

And Manoah said:

"Now, when thy words come to pass, what shall be the manner of the child, and what shall be his work?"

And the angel answered:

"Of all that I said unto the woman let her beware."

Then Manoah offered refreshment to the stranger, saying:

"I pray thee, let us detain thee, that we may make ready a kid for thee."

But he answered:

"Though thou detain me, I will not eat of thy bread: and if thou wilt make ready a burnt-offering thou must offer it unto the Lord." For he saw that Manoah knew not that he was the angel of the Lord.

Then Manoah asked:

"What is thy name? that when thy words come to pass we may do thee honor?"

And the angel answered:

"Wherefore askest thou after my name, seeing it is secret?"

So Manoah was silenced, and he took the kid and the meal which the stranger had refused, and offered them upon a rock unto the Lord; and the angel did wondrously while he and his wife looked on. For it came to pass when the flame of the burnt-offering went up towards heaven from off the altar, that the angel of the Lord ascended in the flame of the altar, and Manoah and his wife fell on their faces to the ground, for when he did no more return they knew an angel of the Lord had been with them. And Manoah said:

"We shall surely die, because we have seen the angel of God face to face."

But the woman answered:

"If the Lord were pleased to kill us he would not have received a burnt-offering and a meal offering at our hands, neither would he have showed us all these things, nor would at this time have told such things as these."

And her faith was justified, for no harm befell either her or her husband, and in time a son was born to her, whom she named *Samson*, and the child grew and the Lord blessed him.

The next we hear of him, he is a grown man, renowned far and wide for his great strength, which is as that of a giant, but not endowed with so much wisdom, I regret to say, as we should expect from the story of his birth. It seems that Zorah, where he lived, was near the land of the Philistines, and what must Samson do but go and fall in love with one of the daughters of that people, a woman living in Timnah? He came back from an expedition to

that town, and told his father and mother, who never had refused him anything:

"I have seen a woman in Timnah, of the daughters of the Philistines: now, therefore, get her for me to wife."

And they, poor souls, answered him:

"Is there never a woman of the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the Philistines?"

But Samson would not listen.

"Get her for me," he said to his father, "for she pleaseth me well."

Now, at this time the Philistines were ruling over Israel, and to Manoah and his wife it was a disgrace that their son should wed one of their country's enemies; but Samson was too determined for them, and they went sadly down with him to the vineyards of Timnah. As they were on their way they encountered a young lion, who came roaring forth to meet them, and they ran before him; but Samson fell upon the great beast and rent him with his bare hands as if he had been a kid, but he told not his father and mother what he had done.

They came without further adventure to their destination, and there Samson saw again the fair Philistine woman, and talked with her, and she pleased him well; and he obliged his parents to make all the arrangements for the marriage. He left them in Timnah while he returned home to prepare for the wedding, and on his way back to fetch his bride he remembered the lion he had killed, and turned aside to see if its body were still where he had left it; and behold, a swarm of bees had made their nest in the body of the lion and filled it with honey. And he filled both hands with the honey and went on, eating as he went, and when he came to his father and mother

he gave unto them, and they did eat, but he told them not where he had found the honey.

The day of the wedding approached, and Samson gave out invitations for a great feast, which was to last seven days; and he particularly asked thirty of his bride's young countrymen as a compliment to her. And to them he said:

"Let me now put forth a riddle unto you: if ye can declare it me within the seven days of the feast, and find it out, then I will give you thirty linen garments and thirty changes of raiment: but if ye cannot declare it me, then shall ye give me thirty linen garments and thirty changes of raiment."

And they agreed, saying:

"Put forth thy riddle, that we may hear it."

And he said unto them:

"Out of the eater came forth meat,
And out of the strong came forth sweetness."

And three days of the feast passed, and the young men puzzled in vain over the riddle. And on the fourth they went secretly to Samson's wife, and said:

"Entice thy husband that he may declare unto us the riddle, lest we burn thee and thy father's house with fire."

And she, poor creature, not knowing which way to turn, came to Samson, and wept before him and said:

"Thou dost but hate me and lovest me not: thou hast put forth a riddle unto the children of my people, and hast not told it me."

And he answered her:

"Behold, I have not told it my father nor my mother, and shall I tell it thee?"

But she was not content, and wept before him the rest of the seven days, and pressed him sore, until at last he could not bear the sight of her grief any longer, and told

her the answer to the riddle, and she hastened to repeat it to the children of her people.

And on the last day of the feast, before the sun went down, the men of the city came to Samson with jeers and taunts, saying:

"What is sweeter than honey?
And what is stronger than a lion?"

Then Samson knew that he had been betrayed, and answered the men bitterly that except his wife had told them they had not guessed the answer, and he turned and went down to Askelon, a neighboring place, and smote thirty men there, and took their apparel, and gave the changes of raiment unto them that declared the riddle.

But his anger was kindled, and he would not take his wife, but gave her in jest to a companion whom he had used as a friend, and went back alone to his father's house, who, I am afraid, was somewhat pleased at the way things had turned out.

But once at home his temper had time to cool, and by the time of the wheat harvest he decided he would forgive his wife and bring her home to his house. So he prepared a kid as a present for her, and went down to seek her at her father's house, but her father would not suffer him to see her.

"I verily thought that thou hadst utterly hated her," he said, "therefore I gave her to thy companion."

And as if that were not bitter enough, he said to Samson:

"Is not her younger sister fairer than she? Take her, I pray thee, instead of her."

Then Samson was furious, and he hurried away from his father-in-law, vowing:

"This time shall I be quits with the Philistines when I do them a mischief."

And he caught three hundred foxes, and took firebrands

and turned them tail to tail, and put a firebrand in the midst between every two tails, and when he had set the brands on fire he let them go into the standing corn of the Philistines, and burnt up both the standing corn and also the olive-yards.

Then the Philistines said:

"Who hath done this?" And the answer was, "Samson, the son-in-law of the Timnite, because he hath taken his wife and given her to his companion." And as they could not find Samson they revenged themselves on his wife, and came up and burnt her and her father with fire.

And Samson, hearing of this outrage, returned in great anger, and smote the Philistines hip and thigh with a great slaughter, and left them discomfited, and then retired and dwelt alone in the cleft of the rock of Etam, which belongs to the tribes of Judah. And the Philistines went up to pursue him. And when the men of Judah saw them coming they asked in alarm:

"Why are ye come up against us?"

And the Philistines answered:

"To find Samson are we come up, to do to him as he hath done to us."

Then three thousand men of Judah went down to the cleft rock of Etam, and said to Samson:

"Knowest thou not that the Philistines are rulers over us? What then is this that thou hast done unto us?"

And he would only answer:

"As they did unto me, so I have done unto them."

And they said unto him, not knowing his strength:

"We are come down to bind thee that we may deliver thee into the hands of the Philistines."

And Samson said quietly:

"Swear unto me that ye will not fall upon me yourselves."

And they answered:

"No, but we will bind thee fast, and deliver thee into their hands: but surely we will not kill thee."

So Samson stood quite docilely while they bound him with two new ropes, and brought him up from the rocks unto Lehi, where the Philistines shouted as they saw him coming.

Then the ropes that were upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and his bands dropped from off his hands. And looking about him for a weapon, he saw on the ground near a new jawbone of an ass and he put forth his hand and took it, and smote a thousand men therewith of the Philistines, shouting as he did so:

"With the jawbone of an ass, heaps upon heaps.
With the jawbone of an ass have I smitten a thousand men."

And it came to pass when he made an end of speaking, that he cast away the jawbone out of his hand, for there were no more of the enemy left to kill, and he suddenly realized that he was sore athirst and had no water to drink. Then he called unto the Lord, saying:

"Thou hast given this great deliverance by the hand of thy servant, and now shall I die of thirst?"

And God clave a hollow place, and there came out water, and when Samson had drunk, his spirit came again and he revived, and he named the place En-hakkore, "the spring of him that calleth."

And Samson's fame spread throughout the land, and the Children of Israel made him Judge over them for a period of twenty years, and during all that time the Philistines were constantly plotting how they might lay hold of him and put him to death. But he was always too clever and too strong to be caught.

All Samson's troubles came to him through women, and the daughters of the Philistines in particular seem to have

had a great charm for him. Once the enemy really succeeded in surprising him when he was at the house of one who lived in Gaza, the great town of the Philistines, "and they compassed him in, and laid wait for him all night in the gate of the city, saying.

"'Let be till morning light, then we will kill him.'"

But Samson arose at midnight, and laid hold of the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts, and plucked them up, bar and all, and put them upon his shoulders, and carried them up to the top of the mountain that is before Hebron, there to remain for years as a laughing-stock unto the Israelites.

But his weakness at last wrought his destruction, for it came to pass, after this last adventure, that Samson loved a woman in the valley of Sorek whose name was Delilah. And the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and said:

"Entice Samson and see wherein his great strength lieth, and by what means we may prevail against him, that we may bind him to humble him: and we will give thee, every one of us, eleven hundred pieces of silver."

So the next time Delilah was alone with the great Israelite, she said to him:

"Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength lieth, and wherewith thou mightest be bound to afflict thee."

But he was too shrewd to trust her, and answered:

"If they bind me with seven green withes (or new bow-strings) that were never dried, then shall I become weak and be as another man."

Then she repeated these words to the Philistines, and they hurried to bring her seven green withes, such as Samson had described, and when he was asleep she bound him with them. And the lords waited in an inner chamber, while she ran in and woke him suddenly, saying:

"The Philistines are upon thee, Samson!"

And he brake the withes as a string of tow is broken when it toucheth the fire. So his strength was not known.

Then Delilah came to Samson again, pretending to be very sorrowful.

"Behold, thou hast mocked me," she said, "and told me lies: now tell me, I pray thee, wherewith thou mightest be bound."

And again he deceived her, saying:

"If only they bind me with new ropes wherewith no work hath been done, then shall I become weak and be as another man."

And again she tried him when he was asleep, taking new ropes to bind him, and saying to him, as before:

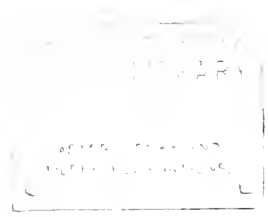
"The Philistines be upon thee, Samson!"

And he brake off the new ropes from his arms like thread. And when Delilah repeated her former reproach, "thou hast mocked me and told me lies," he would only laugh at her and invent fresh stories to tease her, telling her that if she weaved the seven locks of his head together and fastened them to the ground with a pin, he could in no wise raise his head. And when she did so, and awoke him with a sudden alarm, he, not knowing even that he was bound, arose and walked away with the pin of the beam and the web hanging from his hair.

But he really loved Delilah, and when she pretended to be terribly distressed and said to him:

"How canst thou say, 'I love thee,' when thine heart is not with me? Thou hast mocked me these three times, and hast not told me wherein thy great strength lieth"—he was ashamed and did not know how to answer her. And it came to pass when she pressed him daily with her words and urged him, that his soul was vexed unto death, and at last, to show his entire trust in her, he told her his secret.

SAMSON AND DELILAH



"There hath not come a razor upon mine head," he said, "for I have been a Nazarite unto God from my birth: if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man."

And this time Delilah knew that he spoke the truth, and she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying:

"Come up this once, for Samson hath told me all his heart."

And they hastened to her, bringing the price-money in their hands, and she hid them in her house as before. Then she hushed Samson to sleep with his head upon her knees, and when she heard him breathing regularly she called the men softly in, and one of them shaved off the seven locks of Samson's head, and Delilah began to afflict him, and his strength, she could see, was ebbing away. Then she called loudly:

"The Philistines be upon thee, Samson!"

And he awoke and tried to struggle against the strange weakness he felt stealing over him.

"I will go out as at other times and shake myself," he said, for he wist not that the Lord had departed from him. But before he could get on his feet, the Philistines laid hold on him, and in their hands he was like a little child. Then they bound him, though it was hardly necessary, and brought him forth in great triumph, and put out his poor eyes, and after they had made a public exhibition of him in Sorek, he was bound with fetters of brass and sent down to Gaza. And then they would not kill and put him out of his misery, but forced him to grind in the prison house, that they might go every day and delight in his humiliation. Howbeit, one thing they did not notice, and that was that his hair began to grow again after he was shaven.

Soon after this there was appointed a feast-day in the land, and the lords of the Philistines gathered them

together to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon, their god, and to rejoice, for they said:

"Our god hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hand."

And all the people praised Dagon, saying:

"Our god hath delivered into our hand our enemy, and the destroyer of our country, which hath slain many of us."

And it came to pass as the feast went on and their hearts were merry that they said:

"Call for Samson that he may make us sport," for their pleasure could not be complete without contrasting their well-being with his wretchedness.

So Samson was sent for from the prison-house, and was led in by a lad, for he was stone blind. And they set him in the centre of the public dining-hall, between the two great pillars that supported the roof, that all might see him and scoff and jeer. And Samson said softly to the little boy who was leading him by the hand:

"Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house resteth, that I may lean upon them."

And the child, thinking that he was tired and weak, showed him where the columns were. Now the house was full of men and women; and all the lords of the Philistines were there; and there were upon the roof about three thousand men and women, all looking on and laughing while Samson was made the butt for every sort of ridicule. And he prayed in his heart in his great despair:

"O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes."

And he took hold of the two middle pillars, between which he was standing, and leaned upon them, the one with his right hand and the other with his left, and saying:

"Let me die with the Philistines," he bowed himself with all his might, and the house fell upon the lords and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life.

And Samson's brethren and all the house of his father came down and took his body from the Philistines, who dared not interfere, and brought him up and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol, in the burying-place of Manoah his father.

All this happened in the days of the Judges, when there was no king in Israel, and every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

CHAPTER XVII

SAMUEL

Now there was a certain man of Ramathaim-zophim, of the hill country of Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah, and he had two wives; the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah; and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children. And this man went up out of his city from year to year to worship and sacrifice unto the Lord of Hosts in Shiloh, at a temple where Eli and his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests. And when the day came that Elkanah sacrificed, he gave to Peninnah, his wife, and to her sons and daughters, portions: but unto Hannah he gave a double portion; for he loved Hannah. And her rival provoked her sore, to make her fret, because that the Lord had withheld from her the blessing of children, and when she went up to the house of the Lord she was so provoked that she wept and could not eat.

And Elkanah, her husband, said unto her:

"Hannah, why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? Am not I better to thee than ten sons?"

And she rose up after they had eaten and drunk in Shiloh, and tried to bear herself more cheerfully, but she was in bitterness of soul; and at last, as she wept sore, she prayed unto the Lord, and made a vow, thinking perhaps of Samson's mother.

"O Lord of Hosts," she pleaded, "if thou wilt indeed

look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man-child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head."

Now Eli, the priest, sat upon his seat by the door-post of the temple of the Lord, and he marked Hannah, although she saw him not, and as she continued praying, she spoke to the Lord in her heart, but only her lips moved and her voice was not heard, so that he was puzzled by her excitement, and reproved her for unseemly behavior. And Hannah answered:

"My lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I but poured out my soul before the Lord. Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial (that is, a wicked woman): for out of the abundance of my complaint and my provocation have I spoken."

Then Eli answered:

"Go in peace: and the Lord God of Israel grant thy petition that thou hast asked of him."

And she said:

"Let thy servant find grace in thy sight," and went her way and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad. And they rose up early the next morning and worshiped before the Lord, and returned to their home at Ramah. And it came to pass that some time after this Hannah's prayer was granted, and she bare a son, and she called his name *Samuel*, saying:

"Because I have asked him of the Lord."

And that year Elkanah and all his house went up to Shiloh as usual to offer the yearly sacrifice, but Hannah went not with them, for she said unto her husband:

"I will not bring the child until he be old enough to

leave his mother, then I will bring him, that he may appear before the Lord and there abide forever."

And Elkanah answered:

"Do what seemeth thee good," so she tarried at home for two years.

And at the end of that time she took the little boy up with her, with three bullocks, and one ephah of meal, and a skin of wine, and brought him unto the House of the Lord in Shiloh. And they slew a bullock, and brought the child to Eli, and Hannah said:

"O my lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here praying unto the Lord. For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him: therefore, I also have granted him unto the Lord; as long as he liveth he is granted to the Lord."

And in spite of her sorrow at giving up her son, Hannah made a song of praise, saying:

"My heart exulteth in the Lord,
Mine horn is exalted in the Lord:
My mouth is enlarged over mine enemies;
Because I rejoice in Thy salvation.
There is none holy as the Lord:
For there is none beside Thee:
Neither is there any rock like our God.
The Lord killeth, and maketh alive:
He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up:
The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich:
He bringeth low, he also lifteth up,
He raiseth up the poor out of the dust,
He lifteth up the needy from the dunghill,
To make them sit with princes,
And inherit the throne of glory:

The Lord shall judge the ends of the earth,
And he shall give strength unto his king,
And exalt the horn of his anointed."

And Elkanah and Hannah went back to Ramah, leaving little Samuel to be taught to minister unto the Lord in the house of Eli the priest. And I do not like to think of how Hannah must have missed the child, and of how she looked forward all the year to the time of the annual sacrifice at Shiloh, when she could see his face for a few hours at least. She used to make him a little robe, and bring it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband, and except for this the little boy was dressed in a linen ephod, just such as the grown-up priests wore who ministered in the temple.

And Eli, the High Priest, who saw Hannah's loneliness, and how she grieved for her boy, blessed her and her husband, and said:

"The Lord give thee children for the one which was granted to the Lord."

And the Lord heard his words, and other sons and daughters were born to Hannah, so that her home was no more desolate.

And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favor both with the Lord and also with men; and he became especially a pride and joy to Eli, who was now very old, and could find little comfort in his own sons. For Phinehas and Hophni were very unlike their good father. They used the service of the temple for their selfish ends, and when the people brought meat for sacrifices, they stole a part of it for their own use; and as they grew rich on their ill-gotten gains, they spent their money in leading such bad lives that they were a scandal to all the world, and Eli knew not who would become priest after his death. And the word of the

SAMUEL CALLED BY THE LORD

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Lord was rare in those days, and there was no frequent vision (or revelation).

And it came to pass at that time, that one night when Eli, whose eyes had now begun to wax dim, so that he could not see, was laid down in his place, and the lamp of God was not yet gone out in the temple, where he and Samuel slept, that the Lord called out of the darkness unto Samuel. And he, hearing a voice, answered:

"Here am I," and ran to Eli, saying:

"Here am I; for thou calledst me."

And Eli said:

"I called not; lie down again."

And he went and lay down. And the Lord called yet again:

"Samuel."

And Samuel arose, and went back to Eli, saying as before:

"Here am I, for thou calledst me."

And once more Eli answered:

"I called not, my son; lie down again."

Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord yet revealed to him, so that when he heard the voice calling him a third time, he only arose and ran to Eli, insisting:

"Here am I; for thou calledst me."

But Eli perceived that it was the Lord had called unto the child, and therefore he said:

"Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, 'Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth'."

So Samuel went and lay down in his place. And the Lord came and stood, and called as at other times:

"Samuel! Samuel!"

Then Samuel said:

"Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth," as Eli had told him, and the Lord said unto him:

"Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. In that day I will perform against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from the beginning even unto the end. For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons did speak evil of God. And I have sworn that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be expiated with sacrifice nor offering for ever."

Here the voice ceased, and Samuel lay until morning, when it was his duty to open the doors of the house of the Lord. And he feared to tell Eli what he had heard. But the High Priest called him to him, saying:

"Samuel, my son."

And he could only answer:

"Here am I."

And Eli asked earnestly:

"What is the thing that the Lord hath spoken unto thee? I pray thee hide it not from me: God do so to thee and more also, if thou hide anything from me of all the things that he spake unto thee."

Then Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him, and all the old man said at the end was:

"It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth good."

And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground (that is, be forgotten), so that soon all Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, knew that Samuel was established a prophet of the Lord. Dan was a city far in the north of the Promised Land, and Beersheba was a little place in the far south.

During all these years the wars with the Philistines had continued, and just at this time they defeated the Children of Israel in a great battle at Ebenezer, and slew about four thousand men of their army. And the elders of Israel met in council the day after this disaster, saying:

"Wherefore hath the Lord smitten us before the Philistines?"

And being at their wits' end as to what to do, they decided to send to Shiloh and fetch the Ark of the Covenant, which had led their fathers through the wilderness, in the hope that when the people saw it going before them into battle it might inspire them to fresh hope and courage. So they sent hastily, and Phinehas and Hophni, Eli's sons, came bearing the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord of Hosts, which dwelleth between the cherubim. The cherubim were great winged beasts, carved on the outside of the Ark, very much such as those you can see in collections of Assyrian antiquities.

And when the Ark came into the camp all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again. And when the Philistines heard the noise, they said:

"What meaneth this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews?"

And when they understood that the Ark of the Lord was come into the camp they were afraid, silly creatures, and said, thinking of their own false images:

"God is come into the camp. Woe unto us! For there hath not been such a thing heretofore. Woe unto us! Who shall deliver us out of the hand of the mighty gods? These are the gods that smote the Egyptians with all manner of plagues."

But their captains encouraged them, saying:

"Be strong, and quit yourselves like men, O Philistines, that ye be not servants unto the Hebrews, as they have been to you: quit yourselves like men, and fight!"

And they did fight, and so well that Israel was altogether beaten, and fled every man to his tent, and there was a very great slaughter, and thirty thousand of the infantry were killed, and worst of all, in the fray the Ark of the

Covenant was taken, Hophni and Phinehas being cut down as they carried it.

And a man of Benjamin ran out of the army, and came that same day to Shiloh, with his clothes rent and earth upon his head, in token of disaster. And when he came, lo, Eli sat beside the gate watching the way, for his heart trembled for the Ark of God, that had gone out of his keeping.

And as the man told his news, all the city came out, and Eli heard the noise of the crying, and said:

"What meaneth this tumult?"

And the man hasted, and ran, and told himself his dreadful tidings.

Now Eli was ninety and eight years old, and his eyes were set that he could not see, and when the messenger said to him:

"Eli, I am he that came out of the army, and I fled today," he barely had the strength to ask:

"How went the matter, my son?"

And when the man continued mercilessly:

"Israel is fled before the Philistines, and there hath been also a great slaughter among the people, and thy two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the Ark of the Lord is taken," Eli, the poor old priest, at these last words, "the Ark of the Lord is taken," fell from off his seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck broke and he died; for he was an old man and heavy. And he had judged Israel forty years.

And while his family were sorrowing about him, news came that the wife of Phinehas had borne a child, and that hearing that the Ark was taken, and her father-in-law and her husband dead, she too had died. For when the women that stood about her tried to rouse her from the dreadful ill tidings, saying:

"Fear not; thou hast a son;" she answered them not, nor would she look at her baby, but called his name Ichabod, which means "There is no glory," and died, murmuring:

"The glory is departed from Israel, for the Ark of God is taken."

Now, after the Philistines had taken the Ark of the Covenant away with them, they were very much embarrassed as to what to do with it, and they brought it first from Ebenezer unto Ashdod, and set it up in the house of their god, Dagon. And when they arose the next morning, behold, the image of Dagon had fallen upon his face to the ground before the Ark, and they ran and set it up in its place again. But the next morning there was still more trouble, for not only did they find their image fallen, but the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands lay cut off upon the threshold, and only the stump of Dagon was left to him, a pitiful condition for either man or god! As if this were not sign enough that something was wrong, in a few days a terrible plague of boils came upon the people of Ashdod, and then the men of the place said:

"The Ark of the God of Israel shall not abide with us, for his hand is sore upon us."

And they sent for all the lords of the Philistines, and said:

"What shall we do with the Ark of the God of Israel?"

And they could suggest nothing better than to transfer it to a new place, so it was decided to carry it to another Philistine city called Ekron, very near the Israelitish border. But the Ekronites had heard of the misfortunes that had befallen Ashdod, and when they saw the procession coming there was a deadly discomfiture throughout the city, and they cried out:

"They have brought the Ark of the God of Israel to us,

to slay us and our people," and they gathered themselves together before the lords of the Philistines, saying:

"Send away the Ark of the God of Israel, and let it go again to its own place, that it slay us not and our people."

It was seven months now since the lords of the Philistines had captured the Ark, and they were heartily tired of it, and to add to their difficulties, the land commenced to swarm with mice, and the people attributed this plague too to the angry God of Israel. So at last they sent for the priests and diviners of the country, saying:

"What shall we do with the Ark of the Lord? Show us wherewith we shall send it to its place?"

And the wise men pondered long, and returned answer at length:

"If ye send away the Ark of the God of Israel, send it not empty: but in anywise return Him a guilt-offering: then ye shall be healed."

Then said they:

"What shall be the guilt-offering which we shall return to him?"

And they answered:

"Five golden boils, and five golden mice;" and then went on to explain and direct them. "Ye shall make images of your boils and images of your mice that mar the land," they said, "and ye shall give glory unto the God of Israel: peradventure he will lighten his hand from off you. Wherefore do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? When he had wrought wonderfully among them, did they not let the people go? Now, therefore, take and prepare you a new cart and two milch kine on which there hath come no yoke, and tie the kine to the cart, and take the Ark of the Lord and lay it upon the cart; and put the jewels of gold, which ye return

him for a guilt-offering, in a coffer by the side thereof; and send it away, that it may go."

And the lords of the Philistines did all these things as the wise men commanded, and the kine, when they were let go, took the straight way to Bethshemesh, a little Israelite town just over the Philistine border. They went along the highway, lowing as they went, and turned not aside to the right hand or the left; and five lords of the Philistines went after them.

And they of Bethshemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley: and they lifted up their eyes, and saw the Ark, and rejoiced to see it. And the cart came into the field of Joshua, the Bethlehemite, and stood there where there was a great stone: and they clave the wood of the cart, and offered up a burnt-offering to the Lord.

Then the Levites or priests came and took the Ark of the Lord and the coffer that was with it, wherein the jewels of gold were; and the five lords of the Philistines, who had come with the sacred spoil, returned to Ekron that same day.

The Ark was then taken to Kirjath-jearim, and brought into the house of Abinadab in the hill, and the Levites sanctified Eleazar, Abinadab's son, to keep it, and let it abide there for more than twenty years.

CHAPTER XVIII

SAUL

Meanwhile Samuel had become judge of all Israel, and ruled the people so well that their reverence for him increased day by day. He made his home at his father's house in Ramah, and went in circuit to Bethel and Gilgal and Mizpah, where he heard cases and administered justice, much like any modern judge. He had married, and had two sons, Joel and Abijah, who were judges also, but they walked not in their father's ways, for they turned aside after lucre, and took bribes and perverted judgment.

And as Samuel grew old the Israelites saw that neither of his sons was fit to succeed him as Judge, and the elders gathered themselves together and came to the Seer of Ramah, saying unto him:

"Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations."

But the thing displeased Samuel, for hitherto Israel had never had a king, and to his mind royalty meant only oppression of the people. So he said to the elders:

"This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them unto him for his chariots and to be his horsemen, and he will appoint them unto him for captains of thousands and captains of fifties; and he will set some to plow his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war. And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries and to be cooks and to be bakers. And he will take your

fields and your vineyards and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. And he will take your menservants and your maidservants and your goodliest young men and your asses, and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your flocks: and ye shall be his servants. And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the Lord will not answer you."

But in spite of this terrible warning, the elders and people thought they would prefer to be governed by a king, and they insisted:

"Nay, but we will have a king over us; that we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us and fight our battles."

Samuel knew that he must give in ultimately, but at the moment he would only say:

"Go ye every man unto his city," while he gained time to consider whom he should choose for the first sovereign. While he was pondering the matter, the voice of the Lord came to him, saying:

"To-morrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be prince over my people Israel, and he shall save them out of the hand of the Philistines, for their cry is come unto me."

So Samuel waited.

Now there was a man of Benjamin, whose name was Kish, a mighty man of valor, and he had a son called Saul, a young man and a goodly; and there was not among the Children of Israel a goodlier person than he; from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people. And the asses of Kish, Saul's father, were lost. And Kish said to his son:

"Take now one of the servants with thee, and arise, go, seek the asses."

And Saul did as his father had said, passing through the hill country of Ephraim and the land of Shalisha and all the country of the Benjamites, but finding the animals nowhere; till at last when they came to the land of Zuph, Saul feared his father might be anxious at this long absence, and said to his servant:

"Come, and let us return: lest my father leave caring for the asses and take thought for us."

But the servant said:

"Behold now, there is in this city a man of God, and he is a man that is held in honor; all that he saith cometh surely to pass: now let us go thither; peradventure he can tell us concerning our journey whereon we go."

Then said Saul in answer:

"But behold, if we go, what shall we bring the man? For the bread is spent in our vessels, and there is not a present to bring to the man of God: what have we?"

And the servant answered again:

"Behold, I have in my hand the fourth part of a shekel of silver: that will I give to the man of God, to tell us our way."

Then said Saul:

"Well said; come, let us go."

And they went unto the city. And as they went up the ascent to the city, they found young maidens going out to draw water, and asked them:

"Is the seer (or prophet) here?"

And they answered:

"He is: behold, he is before thee: make haste now, for he is come to-day into the city; for the people have a sacrifice to-day in the high place: as soon as ye be come into the city ye shall straightway find him before he go up to the high place to eat: for the people will not eat until he come, because he doth bless the sacrifice. Now, therefore, get you up, for at this time ye shall find him."

And they went to the city, and as they came within the walls, behold, Samuel came out against them, for to go up to the high place.

And as Saul drew near, Samuel heard a voice saying to him:

"Behold the man of whom I spake to thee! This same shall have authority over my people."

Then Saul came up to Samuel and asked him:

"Tell,me, I pray thee, where the seer's house is."

And Samuel answered:

"I am the seer. Go up before me unto the high place, for ye shall eat with me to-day; and in the morning I will let thee go, and will tell thee all that is in thine heart. And as for thy asses that were lost three days ago, set not thy mind on them; for they are found."

And to Saul's further bewilderment he added:

"And for whom is all that is desirable in Israel? Is it not for thee and for all thy father's house?"

"Am not I a Benjamite," said Saul, more and more puzzled, "of the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and my family the least of all the families of the tribe? Wherefore then speakest thou to me after this manner?"

But Samuel would not explain his words. He took Saul and his servant, and brought them into the guest chamber, and made them sit in the chiefest place among them that were bidden, which were about thirty persons. And he bade the cook:

"Bring the portion, of which I said unto thee, 'Set it by thee'."

And the cook took up the shoulder and that which was upon it, and set it before Saul, and Samuel said unto him:

"Behold that which hath been reserved! Set it before thee and eat; because unto the appointed time hath it been kept for thee."

And Saul ate as he was told, though it seemed to him as though he were in some strange dream. And when they came down from the high place into the city, they spread a couch for Saul on the house top, where it was cool, and he lay down, and it came to pass about the spring of the day that Samuel called to him:

"Up, that I may send thee away."

And Saul arose and they went out both of them, he and Samuel, abroad. As they were going down at the end of the city, Samuel said:

"Bid the servant pass on before us, but stand thou still at this time that I may cause thee to hear the word of God."

And when the servant had gone on before them, Samuel took a vial of oil and poured it upon Saul's head, and kissed him, and said:

"Is it not that the Lord hath anointed thee to be prince over his inheritance?"

And then he told Saul of the command God had given him, and of how he was to be king over Israel, but warned him also to keep the secret for the present.

"When thou art departed from me to-day," Samuel said, "then thou shalt find two men by Rachel's sepulchre, and they will say unto thee, 'The asses which thou wentest to seek are found: and lo, thy father hath left the care of the asses, and taketh thought for you, saying, "What shall I do for my son?" ' And when thou shalt come to the oak of Tabor, thou shalt meet three men going up to God to Bethel, one carrying three kids, and another three loaves of bread, and another a skin of wine: and they will salute thee and give thee two loaves of bread, which thou shalt receive at their hand. After that thou shalt come to the Hill of God, where is the garrison of the Philistines: and when thou are come thither thou shalt meet a band of prophets coming down from the high place with a psaltery

and a timbrel and a pipe and a harp before them, and they shall be prophesying: and the spirit of the Lord will come mightily upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them and shalt be turned into another man."

(The prophets of that time were strolling bands of holy men, something like the "begging friars" of the middle ages, who were supposed to be selected by God to reveal his designs. They would go into a sort of frenzy-fit or madness when the inspiration came upon them, and roll about the ground and dance like madmen, while they shouted forth what they believed to be divine truths.)

Finally Samuel let Saul go, adding at the last:

"Thou shalt go before me unto Gilgal; and behold, I will come down unto thee, to offer burnt-offerings, and to sacrifice sacrifices of peace-offerings: seven days shalt thou tarry, till I come to thee and show thee what thou shalt do."

Then Samuel turned back to the city, and it came to pass as Saul went on his way that God gave him another heart.

All things happened on the road as Samuel had said, and at length he came to the hill of God, and saw the band of prophets descending towards him. And the spirit of God did indeed come mightily upon him, and he prophesied among the holy men, and continued for a time in their company. And when all that knew him beforetime saw him with them, they said:

"What is this that is come unto the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?" and the saying became a proverb among the people.

When Saul reached home, and his people questioned him, and asked him what Samuel had said unto him, he answered only:

"He told us plainly that the asses were found;" but con-

cerning the matter of the kingdom whereof the prophet spake, he told them not.

While Saul waited at home, Samuel summoned the people to Mizpah, and told them to present themselves by their tribes and thousands, and from the others he singled out the tribe of Benjamin, and from among them the family of the Matrites. And when the Matrites came forward he asked for Saul, the son of Kish, but when they sought him he could not be found, and it was not until after long searching that they found him concealed away among the stuff or furnishings of their tent. Then they ran and fetched him thence and brought him to Samuel, and when he stood among the people he was higher than any of them from his shoulders and upward.

And the old prophet led him forward, and said to the Children of Israel:

"See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people?"

And all the people shouted:

"God save the King!"

And so their wish was accomplished, and Saul became their sovereign.

But he had to fight for his kingdom, for beside the host of them whose hearts God had touched, and who were ready to acknowledge him as their ruler, there were base fellows who said:

"How shall this man save us?" and would not swear allegiance. However, Saul was as though he had been deaf to their grumbling, and soon he had a chance to prove his worth, when Nahash the Ammonite came up and made war against Jabesh-Gilead. The men of Jabesh, not being strong enough to fight, said to Nahash:

"Make a covenant with us, and we will serve thee," but he would only laugh at them, and say:

"On this condition will I make it with you, that all your right eyes be put out."

Then the elders of Jabesh, in sore distress, asked only for seven days' respite, which Nahash granted; and they sent messengers far and wide over the country, to tell of their strait and to beg for help. When these reached Gibeah, where Saul lived, he came following the oxen out of the field, and seeing the strange men, and his household weeping as they listened to the tidings they brought, he hurried forward and said:

"What aileth the people that they weep?"

And they told him the words of the men of Jabesh. And the spirit of God came mightily upon Saul when he heard these words, and his anger was kindled greatly, and he turned and slew his yoke of oxen and cut them in pieces and sent them through all the borders of Israel by the hand of messengers, saying:

"Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul and Samuel, so shall it be done unto his oxen."

And a terror from the Lord fell on the people, and they came out as one man. And when Saul saw the great host gathering around him, he sent other messengers to Jabesh-Gilead, to say to the poor people there:

"To-morrow by the time the sun is hot ye shall have deliverance."

And the men of Jabesh-Gilead were glad, and sent back word:

"To-morrow we will come out unto you, and ye shall do with us all that seemeth good unto you."

And on the morrow Saul divided his army into three companies, and came into the midst of the camp in the morning watch, and smote the Ammonites until the heat of the day: and it came to pass that they which remained were scattered so that two of them were not left together.

This victory established Saul in the hearts of the people, and they crowded around Samuel, saying:

"Who is he that said, 'Shall Saul reign over us?' Bring the men that we may put them to death."

And it would have gone hard with the former malcontents if Saul had not proclaimed, decidedly:

"There shall not a man be put to death this day: for to-day the Lord hath wrought salvation in Israel."

Then said Samuel to the people:

"Come and let us go to Gilgal and renew the kingdom there."

And they all went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the Lord: and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.

From this time on, for many years, Saul reigned over Israel, and fought against their enemies on every side; against Moab, and against the Children of Ammon, and against Edom and the kings of Zobah, and above all, against the Philistines. Many and long were the battles and campaigns against these arch-enemies of the people, and the Israelites gained one famous victory at Beth-aven, under the leadership of Jonathan, Saul's son, who was as strong and valiant a man as his father.

Saul had married a woman called Ahinoam, and had two sons besides Jonathan, and two daughters, Merab and Michal. And his cousin Abner he made captain of his host, for there was sore war against the Philistines all the days of Saul, and when Saul saw any mighty man or any valiant man, he took him unto him.

Samuel continued for many years to be Saul's most trusted friend and adviser, but at last they had a falling out over a war Saul undertook against the Amalekites. Samuel had urged him to it, for he hated the Amalekites with a special bitterness, and had commanded Saul as he set out:

"Now go, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not: but slay both man and woman and child, ox and sheep, camel and ass."

Saul was generally obedient to the prophet who had made him king, but he had a soft heart, and after he and his people had gained a great victory over the Amalekites and taken Agag, their king, prisoner, he could not make up his mind to carry out Samuel's bloodthirsty instructions. He did indeed kill everything that was vile and refuse, but he spared the people and the best of the sheep and fatlings and oxen and lambs, and brought all the cattle back with him to his own country. This did not at all please Samuel, and when Saul came to him, as was his custom after any momentous occasion, saying:

"Blessed be thou of the Lord: I have performed the commandment of the Lord;" the old man answered sternly:

"What meaneth then this bleating of sheep in my ears and the lowing of oxen which I hear?"

And Saul said in excuse:

"They have brought them from the Amalekites to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God, and I have brought Agag their king."

But Samuel was very angry.

"Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice," he said, "and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as idolatry and teraphim."

And poor Saul, who could not bear Samuel's displeasure, fell at his feet, and said:

"I have sinned. Now, therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me that I may worship the Lord."

But Samuel answered:

"I will not return with thee," and prepared to leave him, and as he turned about to go away Saul laid hold upon the skirt of his robe to detain him, and it rent, and Samuel said in a terrible voice:

"The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day and hath given it to a neighbor of thine, that is better than thou."

Then seeing that Saul was now utterly cowed, the prophet bade him:

"Bring ye hither to me Agag, the king of the Amalekites."

And Saul weakly obeyed, and sent for his prisoner, who knew well enough what the summons meant. However, he came delicately or cheerfully, saying:

"Surely the bitterness of death is past;" and stood before Samuel. And Samuel said:

"As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women," and he hewed Agag in pieces on the spot.

One would think that now he might have been content with the unhappy Saul, but it seems he could not forgive him his one act of disobedience, and we read that Samuel came no more to see the king until the day of his death, although he mourned in secret for him.

Having made up his mind that Saul was no longer worthy of being king over Israel, Samuel commenced to look about for his successor, and his desire fell upon a young man of the house of Jesse. So he took a heifer with him for sacrifice and came to Bethlehem, where the young man lived. And the people of the city, who, like all Israel from the King down, were in great fear of this terrible old man, came to meet him trembling, saying:

"Comest thou peaceably?"

And he answered:

"Peaceably: I am come to sacrifice unto the Lord: sanctify yourselves and come with me unto the sacrifice."

And he especially invited Jesse and his sons to accompany him. And when they approached he looked on the eldest, Eliab, who was a handsome and well-built lad, and said:

"Surely this is the Lord's anointed."

But the angel of the Lord said in his ear:

"Look not on his countenance or on the height of his stature; because I have rejected him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."

And when Abinadab, the second son, came up the angel said:

"Neither hath the Lord chosen this;" and it was the same when Jesse made his third son Shammah to pass by. After him came four others, making seven sons of Jesse in all, but with none of them was Samuel satisfied, and at last he asked their father:

"Are here all thy children?"

And Jesse answered:

"There remaineth yet the youngest, and behold, he keepeth the sheep."

Then said Samuel:

"Send and fetch him, for we will not sit down until he come hither."

And he sent and brought David. Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance and goodly to look upon, and the Voice said in Samuel's ear:

"Arise, anoint him, for this is he."

Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brethren, just as he had done beforetime with Saul; and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward.

Samuel himself went back straightway to Ramah, explaining nothing, and leaving Jesse and his sons in darkness as to the meaning of what they had witnessed, and certainly not dreaming that their little brother and son had on that day been consecrated a king.

CHAPTER XIX

GOLIATH

As Saul grew older and no longer had the support of Samuel's will to lean upon, he became subject to fits of terrible depression, so dark and despairing that they amounted almost to insanity. And at such times the only thing that could rouse him was the sound of sweet music. So he commanded his servants:

"Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring him unto me."

Then answered one of the young men:

"Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, that is cunning in playing and a mighty man of valor, and a man of war and prudent in speech, and a comely person, and the Lord is with him."

And on this recommendation Saul wrote at once to the man of Jesse, saying:

"Send now David, thy son, which is with the sheep."

And Jesse not only sent his son, but bade him carry with him an ass laden with bread, a skin of wine and a kid as an offering unto Saul the king. And David came to Saul and stood before him; and Saul loved him greatly, and appointed him his armor-bearer, and sent to Jesse, saying:

"Let David, I pray thee, stay with me; for he hath found favor in my sight."

And it came to pass when the evil spirit was upon Saul that David took the harp and played with his hands; so

Saul was refreshed and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.

And he had need of health and courage just at this time, for the Philistines were mustering in greater force than ever, gathering together their armies to battle, and marching through the Israelites' country to Socoh, which belongeth to Judah. And when Judah called for aid, Saul went out at the head of the men of Israel, and pitched in the vale of Elah, and set the battle in array against the Philistines. The Philistines stood on the mountain on one side, and Israel stood on the mountain on the other side and there was a valley between them. And while the two hostile armies were thus facing each other, behold a mighty champion came out of the camp of the Philistines, who was called Goliath of Gath. He was a giant among men, six cubits and a span high, and he stalked up and down in front of the Israelites' line, calling out:

"Why are ye come out to set your battle in array? Am not I a Philistine and ye servants of Saul? Choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me. If he be able to fight with me and kill me, then will we be your servants: but if I prevail against him and kill him, then shall ye be our servants and serve us."

And when no one answered him, he shouted:

"I defy the armies of Israel this day: give me a man that we may fight together."

And when Saul and all Israel heard this challenge, they were discouraged and greatly afraid, for not only was this terrible giant almost twice as tall as any of their number, but he was clad besides in a redoubtable coat of mail, the weight of which alone was five thousand shekels of brass. And he had a helmet of brass upon his head and greaves of brass upon his legs, and a target of brass between his

shoulders, so that as the sun shone on him he glistened like a great yellow mountain.

And he had besides a staff and a spear of iron, and his armor-bearer staggered before him carrying an enormous shield.

The more they gazed on him, the more all was consternation in the camp of Israel, and there was no one dared make answer, until at last Goliath withdrew and disappeared among the Philistines' tents. Then every morning and every evening he drew near and repeated the challenge, until forty days had passed.

And it happened that on the fortieth day David came into the camp, with a message for his three elder brothers, who had followed Saul to the wars. David's own position as armor-bearer to the king must have been purely honorary, for at the beginning of the war he had been thought too young to fight, and had been sent home to mind his father's sheep. But on this morning Jesse sent for him, and said:

"Take now for thy brethren an ephah of this parched corn, and these ten loaves, and carry them quickly to the camp to thy brethren: and bring these ten cheeses unto the captain of their thousand, and look how thy brethren fare."

And David, nothing loath, we may be sure, rose up early in the morning and left the sheep with a keeper, and set forth to the Vale of Elah as his father had commanded him.

And he came to the place of the wagons, or the first barricade, and saw the two armies encamped in the face of each other, and he left his baggage in the hands of a keeper while he ran to salute his brethren. As he talked with them, behold, there came forth the champion, Goliath of Gath, out of the ranks of the Philistines, and stood in the open place between the camps while he delivered his usual

taunts and threats. And to David's surprise, he saw his countrymen flying before him, not even trying to hide their fear. And they gathered around him, as he was a newcomer, asking:

"Have ye seen this man that is come up? Surely to defy Israel is he come up: and it shall be that the man who killeth him, the king will enrich him with great riches, and will give him his daughter, and make his father's house free in Israel."

Then David asked:

"Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?"

And at that his brother Eliab's anger was kindled against him, for he thought that David was reproaching his comrades, and he said:

"Why art thou come down, and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride and the naughtiness of thy heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle."

But David answered contemptuously:

"What have I now done? Was it not but a word?" and turning away from Eliab and his companions, he made his way to the king. And when he came before Saul, he said:

"Let no man's heart fail because of this Philistine; thy servant will go and fight with him."

But Saul looked at his little musician in amazement, and answered:

"Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth."

But David would not be discouraged. He said to Saul:

"Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and when there came a lion and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock, I went out after him, and smote him and delivered it out of

his mouth: and when the lion arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him and slew him. Thy servant smote both the lion and the bear, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God."

And then with a beautiful light in his face, he added quietly:

"The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear, 'he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine."

And something in his manner impressed Saul, and he sought no more to dissuade him.

"Go," he said, "and the Lord shall be with thee."

And he clad the lad with his own apparel, and put a coat of mail upon him, and a helmet of brass upon his head, and girded him with his sword. And David assayed to go forth in the armor, but found himself so encumbered with the weight that he could hardly drag himself along. So he said to the king:

"I cannot go with these, for I have not proved them," meaning "I am not used to them."

And he put them off him, and went forth in his simple shepherd's dress, with only his staff in his hand; and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook near by, and put them in his shepherd's scrip or bag, to serve for a little sling, and with this preparation alone he went out to meet the mighty Philistine.

Goliath was just turning back to his own camp when a shout from the Israelites warned him that at last a warrior had been found to take up his challenge, and he looked about and saw David standing there, and he disdained him, for he was but a youth, with his ruddy, fair countenance and slender form. And seeing only a staff in David's hand, the great Philistine asked jeeringly:

"Am I a dog that thou comest to me with staves?"

And then with horrid curses he shouted:

"Come to me and I will give thy flesh to the fowls of the air and to the beasts of the field."

And David's answer rang out:

"Thou comest to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, which thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand: and I will smite thee and take thine head from off thee; and I will give the carcasses of the hosts of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel."

And it came to pass when Goliath came in great anger at these words, and drew nigh to David, that David waited not, but ran to meet him, and as he approached he put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone and slang it, and smote him in his forehead with such force and precision that the missile sank into his forehead, and he fell upon his face to the earth. And before the fallen giant had time to get on his feet again, David ran and stood over him, and took his sword and drew it out of its sheath, and slew him, cutting off his head with his own sword.

And when the Philistines saw that their mighty man was dead, they fled, and the men of Israel and Judah came forth with shouts and pursued them until thou comest to Gai and to the gates of Ekron, and the wounded of the enemy were scattered all along the way.

Meanwhile Abner, the captain of the host of Israel, had gone in search of David, and brought him before King Saul and his nobles with the head of Goliath still in his hand. And the king said before them all:

"Whose son art thou, thou young man?"

And David answered:

"I am the son of thy servant Jesse, the Bethlehemite."

And as he made an end of speaking, the soul of Jonathan, Saul's son, who stood near, was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house, and he gave him the armor of Goliath to hang up in his tent as a trophy.

Then Jonathan and David made a covenant together, because Jonathan loved him as his own soul. And he stripped himself of the robe that was upon him and gave it unto David, and his apparel even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle. And because these two never changed in their love and loyalty towards each other, the names of David and Jonathan have come down to us linked together as examples of a perfect friendship.

Henceforth David dwelt at the king's court, and went out whithersoever Saul sent him, and behaved himself so wisely that Saul set him over the men of war, and it was good in the sight of the people; too good to last, unfortunately, for David won so much commendation and praise from all who came near him that the king's jealousy was roused against him, and with Saul's unhappy disposition, many were the troubles that followed.

CHAPTER XX

SAUL AND DAVID

Saul's anger was particularly enkindled against David, and not unnaturally, on one occasion when they both were on their way home from a battle—with the Philistines, of course—and the women of one of the cities of Israel came out singing and dancing to meet King Saul, with timbrels, with joy and with instruments of music. That was all very well, but the women answered each other in this song, and what they said was:

"Saul hath slain his thousands,
And David his ten thousands."

And Saul felt that this was going too far. He was very wroth and displeased with the song, and said to himself:

"They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what more can he have but the kingdom?"

"And it came to pass on the morrow that an evil spirit came upon Saul, and he raved in the midst of the house, and David came as usual to soothe him with his harp, and Saul had his spear in his hand, and as David entered he cast it at him, muttering:

"I will smite him even to the wall."

And David avoided out of his presence twice, thinking only that the madness-fit was on his poor master. After that Saul was afraid of David, and removed him from him, and gave him the position over one of his thousands, and as he saw how wisely David behaved himself in

all his ways he stood in awe of him; but all Israel and Judah, as they saw him coming in and going out before them, loved David.

MICHAL

Now Saul, in order to bind David closely to his interests, proposed to give him his eldest daughter Merab in marriage.

"Her will I give thee to wife," he said to David, "only be thou valiant for me and fight the Lord's battles."

And David answered with humility:

"Who am I, and what is my life or my father's family in Israel that I should be son-in-law to the king?"

I do not know what Saul said in answer, but Merab took things into her own hands by marrying another man just at this time, and leaving David to her younger sister Michal, who had already learned to love him. And Saul was pleased when he saw his second daughter's preference, and commanded his servants, saying:

"Commune with David secretly, and say, 'Behold, the king hath delight in thee, and all his servants love thee: now, therefore, be the king's son-in-law.' "

And Saul's servants spake these words in the ears of David. And he answered them:

"Seemeth it to you a light thing to be the king's son-in-law, seeing that I am a poor man and lightly esteemed?"

And when they repeated what David had said to the king, Saul's evil genius took possession of him, and he said:

"Thus shall ye say to David, 'The king desireth not any dowry, but an hundred victims of the Philistines, to be avenged of the king's enemies,' " for he thought in his heart to make David fall in the battle.

But when David heard what the king had said, far from suspecting any ill intent, he was well pleased to become his son-in-law on such honorable terms, and he hurried off with

his thousand men, and did not come back until he brought with him the record of two hundred Philistines slain.

Then Saul was obliged to make a semblance of being grateful, and to celebrate David's marriage with Michal; but in his heart the love he had formerly had for David turned to hatred, and he became his enemy continually. At last his exasperation reached to such a pitch that he sent for Jonathan, his son, and some of his most confidential servants, and suggested to them that they should slay David. But Jonathan, who delighted in David, remonstrated with his father, and spake good of him, saying:

"Let not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works have been to thee-ward very good: for he put his life in his hands and smote the Philistines, and the Lord wrought a great salvation for all Israel: thou sawest it, and didst rejoice: wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause?"

And for the time Saul's better nature responded, and he hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan, and sware:

"As the Lord liveth, he shall not be put to death."

And Jonathan called David, and brought him before Saul, and he was in his presence as beforetime. But only for a little while! For again there was war with the Philistines, and again David slew them with a great slaughter, and when he came home from the battle and went to pay his respects to the king, Saul received him by flinging his spear at his head. Luckily it flew past David and buried itself in the wall behind him, but at last he had a clear indication of Saul's temper towards him, and he fled away and escaped that night, with the aid of Michal, his wife. For she urged him to go, warning him:

"If thou save not thy life to-night, to-morrow thou wilt be slain."

So she let him down through the window, and when she saw him safe away, she took the teraphim, or large household image, and laid it in the bed, and put a pillow of goat's hair at the head thereof, and covered it with the clothes. And when Saul sent messengers to take David, as she had expected, she let them look into the room, saying:

"He is sick," and they went back and told the king they had seen David lying ill in bed. But Saul was determined to kill him now, well or ill, and he bade the men return, saying:

"Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may slay him."

And when they came in, behold, the teraphim was in the bed, with its wooden head comfortably resting on the goat's hair pillow. And they went trembling back to their master, and reported to him that they had been cheated, and he sent for Michal, his daughter, and berated her, saying:

"Why hast thou deceived me thus, and let mine enemy go?" he asked her, forgetting that his enemy was her husband.

But she answered boldly:

"He said unto me, 'Let me go.' Why should I kill him?"

And her father had no sufficient reason to give her.

DAVID'S FLIGHT FROM SAUL

David meanwhile fled to Ramah, and took refuge with Samuel for a while, until rumors of Saul's coming chased him thence, and then he made his way back secretly to Jonathan, and said to him:

"What have I done? What is mine iniquity? And what is my sin before thy father that he seeketh for my life?"

And Jonathan, who had heard nothing of the teraphim escapade, answered:

"God forbid: thou shalt not die. Behold, my father doeth nothing either great or small, but that he discloseth it unto me: and why should he hide this thing from me? It is not so."

But David said sadly:

"Thy father knoweth well that I have found grace in thine eyes, and he saith, 'Let not Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved,' but truly as the Lord liveth and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death."

Then Jonathan asked:

"What doth thy soul desire, that I should do it for thee?"

And David said:

"Behold, to-morrow is the new moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king at meat: but let me go that I may hide myself in the field unto the third day at even. If thy father miss me at all, then say, 'David earnestly asked leave of me that he might run to Bethlehem, his city, for it is the yearly sacrifice there for all the family.' If he say thus, 'It is well,' thy servant shall have peace; but if he be wroth, then know that evil is determined by him."

By which it appears that Saul and David had still kept up an appearance of cordial relations, such as necessitated some explanation of David's not being at the king's feast of the New Moon.

Jonathan agreed to all David's suggestions, and said to him moreover:

"When thou hast stayed three days, come to the rock of Ezel, and I will shoot three arrows on the side thereof, as though I shot at a mark, and behold I will send a lad, saying, 'Go find the arrows.' If I say unto the lad, 'Behold, the arrows are on this side of thee;' take them, and come;

for there is peace to thee, and no hurt, as the Lord liveth. But if I say thus unto the boy, 'Behold, the arrows are beyond thee;' go thy way, for the Lord hath sent thee away."

And Jonathan, the noble-hearted, added:

"And as touching the matter which thou and I have spoken of, behold, the Lord is between thee and me forever."

So David hid himself in the field; and when the new moon was come, the king sat him down to eat meat. And the king sat upon his seat, as at other times, even upon the seat by the wall; and Jonathan stood up, and Abner sat by Saul's side, but David's place was empty. Nevertheless, Saul spake not anything that day: for he thought, 'Something hath befallen him.' And it came to pass on the morrow that David's place was empty again: and Saul said unto Jonathan:

"Wherefore cometh not the son of Jesse to meat, neither yesterday nor to-day?"

And Jonathan answered:

"David earnestly asked leave of me to go to Bethlehem, and he said, 'Let me go, I pray thee, for our family hath a sacrifice in the city; and my brother, he hath commanded me to be there; and now, I pray thee, let me get away and see my brethren.' Therefore he cometh not unto the king's table."

Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said unto him:

"Thou son of a perverse, rebellious woman, do not I know that thou hast chosen this son of Jesse to thine own shame? For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom. Wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die."

But Jonathan answered Saul his father:

"Wherefore should he be put to death, what hath he done?"

And Saul, for answer, cast his spear at him, and Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and did eat no meat: for he was grieved for David, because his father had done him shame.

And it came to pass in the morning, that Jonathan went out into the field to the place appointed with David, and a little lad with him. And as the lad ran he shot an arrow, making it pass over him. And when the lad was come to the place of the arrow which Jonathan had shot, Jonathan cried after him:

"Is not the arrow beyond thee? Make speed, haste, stay not."

And Jonathan's lad gathered up the arrows and came to his master, but he guessed not anything of what the matter really meant. And Jonathan gave his weapons to him, saying:

"Go carry them to the city."

And as soon as he was gone David arose out of a place toward the south, and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times, in token of respect and gratitude to Jonathan; and they kissed one another, and wept with one another. And Jonathan said:

"Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord, saying, 'The Lord shall be between thee and me forever'."

And David arose and departed, and Jonathan went into the city. But by this time Saul's servants were out searching everywhere for David, and he had several narrow escapes from their hands. First Ahimelech, a priest of Nob, gave him shelter, and let him have the shew-bread, or consecrated bread, off the altar to eat, as he had nothing

else to give him; and as chance or Providence would have it, when he was leaving he begged Ahimelech to give him a weapon. And to his joy and surprise the priest answered:

"The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom thou slewest in the vale of Elah, behold it is here wrapped up in a cloth behind the ephod (or holy image): if thou wilt take that, take it: for there is no other here."

And David said gladly:

"There is none other like that; give it me," and buckled it to his side.

He fled that day to the city of Achish, the king of Gath, but he was sore afraid of the inhabitants, and feigned himself mad in their hands, and so well did he act his part that King Achish said to his servants:

"Do I lack madmen that ye have brought this fellow into my presence?"

And he drove him out of his dominions. David therefore departed thence, and escaped to the cave of Adullam; and when his brethren and all his father's house heard it, they went down thither to him. And every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was bitter of soul gathered themselves unto him, and he became captain over them: and there were with him about four hundred men, which is to say that David found himself at the head of a small band of outlaws. He sent his father and mother to the king of Moab for protection, for from this time on Saul's hatred of David grew to such proportions that none of David's people were safe from his enmity, and he himself neglected all the other affairs of his kingdom and gave himself up to the pursuit of his former friend.

There is no end to the stories that are told of their adventures in these days. David was warned by a wander-

ing prophet called Gad to get him out of the land of Judah, and he hurried off with his followers to the forest of Hereth, where they must have led an open-air life something resembling that of Robin Hood.

Saul meanwhile was sitting in Gibeah under the tamarisk tree on the height of Ramah, with his spear in his hand and all his servants standing about him, while he questioned the Benjamites as to David's whereabouts. He was especially embittered just now, because he had lately heard of Jonathan's covenant with David, and he said to the sons of Benjamin:

"There is none of you that is sorry for me, or discloseth to me when my son maketh a league with the son of Jesse," and he questioned them closely as to whether they had seen David. At last Doeg the Edomite, a man standing by the servants of Saul, said:

"I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob to Ahimelech, and he gave him victuals and the sword of Goliath the Philistine."

Then the king sent to call Ahimelech and all the priests that were in Nob, and when they came with Ahimelech at their head, he said with great severity:

"Why have ye conspired against me in that ye have given bread and a sword to the son of Jesse, that he should rise against me?"

Then Ahimelech answered the king:

"And who among all thy servants is so faithful as David; which is the king's son-in-law, and is taken into thy council, and is honorable in thine house? Have I only today begun to inquire of God for him? Be it far from me."

And the king, in reward for this noble speech, said:

"Thou shalt surely die, Ahimelech, thou and all thy father's house;" and in one of his sudden accesses of fury he said to the guard that stood about him:

"Turn and slay the priests of the Lord; because their hand is also with David, and because they knew that he had fled and did not disclose it to me."

But the king's servants would not put forth their hand to fall upon the priests of the Lord, and Saul was obliged to command Doeg the Edomite:

"Turn thou and fall upon the priests," which he did with such a willing spirit that he slew on that day four-score and five persons that did wear a linen ephod (or priestly garment). Of course, Ahimelech was murdered first of all, and the town of Nob was put to the sword, and the only man that escaped therefrom was a grandson of Ahimelech, named Abiathar, who fled to David with the dreadful news. And David was bowed down in spirit when he heard that Saul had slain the Lord's priests.

"I knew that Doeg the Edomite would surely tell Saul," he said, "I have occasioned the death of thy father's house;" and he blamed himself bitterly, and said to the young Abiathar:

"Abide thou with me; fear not; for he that seeketh my life seeketh thy life; for with me thou shalt be in safeguard."

The next we hear of David is of his going with his band to the aid of the men of Keilah, who were sore harassed by the Philistines, of his winning a victory for them, and getting away from the city just as Saul had heard that he was there and was making ready to come and attack him. From there he went to the hill country in the wilderness of Ziph, and here Jonathan came on a stolen visit, saying:

"Fear not: for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee; and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee; and that also my father knoweth."

He had barely departed again before the Ziphites sent word to Saul that David was in their country, and as he

hurried down to the chase on one side of the mountain David and his men passed around by the other and went and hid themselves in the strongholds of En-gedi.

THE CAVE OF EN-GEDI

Here Saul still came on in pursuit, with three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, seeking David upon the rocks of the wild goats. And they came to the sheepcotes by the way where was a cave, and Saul went in to rest, and laid himself down near the entrance and fell asleep. Now David and his men were sitting in the innermost parts of the cave, and the men said to David:

"Behold, the Lord hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand, and thou shalt do to him as it shall seem good unto thee."

But he answered:

"The Lord forbid that I should put forth my hand against my lord, seeing he is the Lord's anointed."

And he checked his men with these words, and suffered them not to rise against Saul, only he himself crept forward and cut off the skirt of his robe while he slept.

And when Saul rose up from his sleep and went out of the cave, David followed him and cried out:

"My lord the king!"

And when Saul looked behind him, David bowed with his face to the ground and did obeisance, and pleaded with the master whom he had loved, saying:

"Wherefore hearkenest thou to men's words, who say, 'Behold, David seeketh thy hurt'? Behold thine eyes have seen to-day how that the Lord delivered thee into mine hand in the cave; and some bade me kill thee, but I spared thee, and said, 'I will not put forth mine hand against my lord, because he is the Lord's anointed.' Moreover, my father," he continued with even more earnestness, see,

yea see, the skirt of thy robe is in my hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know thou and see that there is neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee, though thou huntest after my soul to take it. The Lord judge between me and thee, but mine hand shall not be upon thee."

"After whom is the king of Israel come out?" asked David finally, "after whom dost thou pursue? After a dead dog, after a flea? The Lord be judge and give sentence between me and thee, and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand."

And it came to pass when David made an end of speaking these words that Saul said:

"Is this thy voice, my son David?" and lifted up his voice and wept, and confessed:

"Thou art more righteous than I; for thou hast rendered unto me good, whereas I have rendered unto thee evil. Thou hast dealt well with me in this day. For if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away? Wherefore the Lord reward thee good for what thou hast done unto me."

And all might yet have been well between them, for Saul went away touched at heart and believing again in David, but once out of the charm of his presence the old black doubts and jealousies came crowding back, and soon he was harrying his friend as remorselessly as before.

Soon after this Samuel died, and all Israel gathered themselves together and lamented him, and buried him at his home in Ramah, that is, all Israel except David. He did not dare to present himself at the funeral.

ABIGAIL

David was living at this time in the wilderness of Paran, near Carmel. And there was a man of Carmel named Nabal, who had very great possessions, three thousand

sheep and a thousand goats, but he was a churlish fellow and evil in his doings. And at the time of the sheep-shearing David sent some of his young men to him, telling them to say they came from David, the son of Jesse, and to ask for food of any sort, for they had little to eat in the wilderness.

And Nabal responded roughly to them, saying:

"Who is David? And who is the son of Jesse? There be many servants nowadays that break away every man from his master. Shall I then take my bread and my water and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men of whom I know not whence they be?"

When David's messengers returned to him with these insolent words, he was justly indignant, and he told four hundred of his young men to gird on their swords and follow him. Two hundred they left to guard their camp. And they set out to take vengeance on Nabal of Carmel.

Now Nabal had a wife who was very different from himself. She was named Abigail, and was a woman of good understanding and of a beautiful countenance, and she had had no sympathy with her husband's treatment of David's messengers; and now one of her husband's servants came running to her to tell her that David was descending on Carmel, with four hundred armed men behind him.

"Evil is determined against our master and against all his house," said the servant, "for he is such a son of Belial (meaning Nabal) that one cannot speak to him. Now therefore know and consider what thou wilt do."

And Abigail decided very quickly. She made haste and took two hundred loaves and two skins of wine and five sheep ready dressed and five measures of parched corn and an hundred clusters of raisins and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid them on asses, and said to her young men:

"Go on before me; behold, I come after you."

And saying nothing to her husband, whom she had never cared for, she set out on her ass to meet David and his men. And when she saw them coming she lighted down from off her ass and fell before David on her face, saying:

"Upon me, my lord, upon me be the iniquity: and let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine ears, and hear the words of thine handmaid."

And David stopped willingly enough to listen. Then Abigail told him who she was, the wife of Nabal of Carmel, and of how she had never loved her husband, for he was unkind to her as to every one, and of how she had regretted his evil message of yesterday and had set out herself with an offering for David and his young men (here she had the present brought forward), and had come to crave mercy for herself, and if she could, to obtain it for her husband Nabal. And she ended by saying to David, solemnly:

"And though man be risen up to pursue thee and to seek thy soul, yet the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God; and the souls of thine enemies, them shall he sling out, as from the hollow of a sling."

And David accepted Abigail's gift and promised her his protection.

"Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me," said he, "and blessed be thy wisdom and blessed be thou; for in very deed, as the Lord, the God of Israel liveth, which hath withholden me from hurting thee, except thou hadst hasted and come to meet me surely there had not been left unto Nabal by the morning light so much as one man child."

And he told her to go in peace to her home, and he himself turned back to the wilderness with his young men, rejoicing over the food Abigail had brought them.

And Abigail returned home, and behold Nabal was holding a great feast, like the feast of a king, and his heart was very merry with wine, so that he could listen to none of his wife's words until the morning light. Then she told him all that she had done, and when he heard of David's anger and his terrible band of armed men, his heart died within him, for he was a coward, and he became as a stone. And he sat expecting David every day for ten days, and at the end of that time he died from pure fright. When David heard of it he said philosophically that the evil doing of Nabal had returned upon his own head, and thanked the Lord for having kept him from blood-guiltiness in his direction. And as soon as the funeral was over he sent and asked Abigail to become his wife. And when his servants came to her, saying:

"David hath sent us unto thee to take thee to him for wife," she did not apparently find his message at all peremptory, but arose and bowed herself to the earth, and said:

"Behold, thine handmaid is a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord."

And she rode upon an ass, with five damsels of hers following her, and went after the messengers of David, and became his wife. He had already married before this a certain woman of Jezreel called Ahinoam, so that Abigail was his third choice. Only poor Michal all this time was living at home in her father's court.

ZIKLAG

Time went on, and Saul's enmity for David only increased, until David grew discouraged and very tired of his wandering outlaw life, and he said to himself:

"I shall perish one day by the hand of Saul: there is nothing better for me than to escape into the land of the

Philistines; and Saul shall despair to seek me anywhere in all the borders of Israel."

And David arose and passed over, he and the six hundred men that were with him, to one of the Philistine kings, Achish of Gath, to whom he had been once before, if you remember, and dwelt with him, he and his men, every man with his household, and David with his two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelite and Abigail the Carmelite, Nabal's wife. And it was told Saul that David had fled to Gath and he sought no more again for him.

King Achish, for his part, was only too glad to have one of his most powerful enemies turn into a friend, and living quietly in his dominions, and when David, realizing this, went to him and said:

"If now I have found grace in thine eyes, let them give me a place in one of the cities in the country, that I may dwell there," he willingly gave him Ziklag that day, and in Ziklag David dwelt for a full year and four months, and Achish grew to love him, and thought, "He shall be my servant forever," and gave him the honorable post of Keeper of the King's Head.

And it came to pass in these days that the Philistines gathered their hosts together for warfare, to fight with Israel, and Achish ordered David to go to the war with him. David was in a terrible predicament at this command, because of course he could not fight against his own country, and at the same time he dreaded bringing Achish's anger upon him by refusing to follow him. Luckily the lords of the Philistines decided the question for him, for when they all gathered at Gath preparatory to the raid, they asked suspiciously of King Achish:

"What do these Hebrews here?" and would listen to none of the explanations he tried to give. Indeed, the more he spoke, the more wroth they grew, and at last they said:

"Make the man," meaning David, "return to Ziklag and let him not go with us to battle, lest in the battle he become an adversary to us. For is not this David, of whom they sang:

'Saul hath slain his thousands,
But David his ten thousands'?"

So Achish had to submit, but he sent for David and said to him:

"As the Lord liveth, thou hast been upright, and thy going out and thy coming in with me in the host is good in my sight: for I have not found evil in thee since the day of thy coming unto me unto this day: nevertheless the lords favor thee not. Wherefore now return, and go in peace, that thou displease not the lords of the Philistines."

And David hid his satisfaction at these words, and asked the king:

"But what have I done, or what hast thou found in thy servant that I may not go and fight?"

And poor Achish answered:

"I know that thou art good in my sight as an angel of God: notwithstanding the princes of the Philistines have said, 'He shall not go up with us to battle.' Wherefore rise up early in the morning and depart."

So David rose up, he and his men, and departed to their abiding-place, and the Philistines took the road to Jezreel.

And when David and his party reached Ziklag on the third day, what was their wrath and dismay to find that in their absence the Amalekites had made a raid upon the south, and had smitten Ziklag and burnt it with fire, and taken captive the women and all that were therein, both small and great; they slew not any, but carried them off and went their way. And when David and the people that

were with him came to the city and saw it burned with fire and their wives and their sons and their daughters taken captive, they lifted up their voices and wept until they had no more power to weep. And though David's two wives were gone with the rest and he was greatly distressed, because the soul of his people was grieved, they blamed him for their misfortunes and spoke of stoning him, in the old Israelitish way.

He wasted no time in argument, but summoned his six hundred brave followers around him and set off straightway in pursuit of the robbers. And they pressed on so hard that at the brook Besor two hundred of the men were faint and could not go over the brook, and were forced to stay behind. David kept on with the rest, and presently some of his advance guard brought to him an Egyptian whom they had found in a field, half dying of hunger. And they gave him bread and water and a piece of a cake of figs and two clusters of raisins; and when he had eaten his spirit came again to him, for he had eaten no bread nor drunk any water three days and three nights.

Seeing the man quite restored, David said to him:

"To whom belongest thou, and whence art thou?"

And he answered:

"I am a young man of Egypt, servant to an Amalekite, and my master left me because three days agone I fell sick. We made a raid upon the south and we burned Ziklag with fire."

At this David asked no more questions, but only:

"Wilt thou bring me down to this troop?"

And the Egyptian answered:

"Swear unto me by God that thou wilt neither kill me nor deliver me up into the hand of my master and I will bring thee down to this troop."

Then he was put between two Hebrews at the head of the band, and he led them directly to where the Amalekites had pitched their camp. And behold, they were spread abroad over all the ground, eating and drinking and feasting amidst the great spoil that they had taken out of the land of the Philistines and out of the land of Judah.

And the Israelites fell upon them so unexpectedly that they had no time even to grasp their weapons, and they smote them from the twilight even unto the evening of the next day; and there escaped not a man of them, save four hundred young men which rode upon camels and fled.

And David recovered all that the Amalekites had taken, and rescued his two wives, and to all his people there was nothing lacking, neither small nor great, neither sons nor daughters, neither spoil, nor anything that they had taken; David brought back all. And we hear no more of his people wishing to stone him.

Not only did the victorious Children of Israel get back their own possessions, but all that the enemy had taken; from other countries fell into their hands, and they drave great flocks and herds back before them on their homeward march.

Now, when they came to the brook Besor on their way, the two hundred men who were waiting there proposed that they also should share in the spoil, because they had guarded David's camp equipments and goods, as a rear guard. But the greedy men who had gone down with David to the battle did not want to do this, and said:

"Because they went not with us, we will not give them aught of the spoil that we have recovered, save to every man his wife and his children."

But David would not hear of this.

"As his share is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his share be that tarrieth by the stuff," said he; and this memorable speech became a statute and an ordinance in Israel from that day.

When they were finally in Ziklag and could count over their gains, David found himself so rich that he sent presents unto all the elders of Judah, from Bethel to Hebron, to all the places where he and his men were wont to haunt, a very wise policy on his part, as was fully proved later.

THE WITCH OF ENDOR

Now after Samuel's death, and indeed before it, Saul had grown to dread the revelations of inspired men to such an extent that he had put away the wizards and all manner of familiar spirits out of the land.

But at this time, when he heard that the Philistines were gathering against him, a terrible foreboding came upon him, and he longed for some one of whom to seek council and to lean upon, and his heart returned to the guide of his youth, Samuel. And when he saw with his own eyes the host of the enemy, he was afraid and his heart trembled greatly, and he said to his servants:

"Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her."

And they answered, hesitatingly:

"Behold, there is such a woman living in Endor."

And Saul disguised himself and put on other raiment, and went, he and two other men with him, and came to the woman by night, and Saul said to her:

"Divine unto me, I pray thee, by the familiar spirit, and bring me up whomsoever I shall name unto thee."

At first the witch pretended not to understand.

"Thou knowest," said she, "what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off them that have familiar spirits and the

SAUL VISITS THE WITCH OF ENDOR

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wizards out of the land: wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die?"

But Saul sware to her:

"As the Lord liveth, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing;" and at that she let them come into her dwelling. It was quite dark, save for the light of one torch, and Saul's heart quaked within him; but when the woman turned to him and said:

"Whom shall I bring up to thee?" he answered steadfastly:

"Samuel."

There was silence for a few seconds, and then suddenly the witch cried out with a loud voice:

"Why hast thou deceived me, for thou art Saul?"

And the king answered:

"Be not afraid: for what seest thou?"

And she answered, as in a dream:

"I see a god coming up out of the earth."

And Saul said:

"What form is he of?"

And she said again:

"An old man cometh up, and he is covered with a robe."

Then Saul knew that Samuel was before him, and he bowed to the ground and did obeisance. And a voice, the voice of Samuel, said:

"Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up?"

And poor Saul said:

"I am sore distressed: for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me and answereth me no more either by prophets or by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do."

And Samuel answered him in awful tones:

"Wherefore then dost thou ask me, seeing the Lord is

departed from thee, and is become thine adversary? And the Lord hath wrought as he spake by me: he hath rent the kingdom out of thy hand, and given it to thy neighbor, even to David."

And at this Saul fell straightway his full length upon the earth, for he was sore afraid, and it was with his face buried in the dust that he heard the prophet's final words:

"Moreover the Lord will deliver Israel also with thee into the hand of the Philistines: and to-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me."

And when Saul raised his head he found himself alone with the witch, and there was no strength in him; for he had eaten no bread all the day, nor all the night; and the woman saw that he was sore troubled, and she brought him a morsel of bread. And at first he would not eat, but she and his servants constrained him, and lifted him up and put him on a bed. And the woman had a fatted calf in the house, which she hasted and killed, and she took flour and kneaded it and did bake unleavened bread thereof; and she brought them before Saul and his servants, and they did eat; and they rose up straightway and rode away into the night.

THE DEATH OF SAUL

And the next day was the great battle of Gilboa, in which the Philistines triumphed altogether over the Israelites. Saul went into the field with a heavy heart, and he soon saw that the battle was going against him, and tried to fly; but the enemy's archers overtook him, and he was greatly distressed because of them. Then he called out to his armor-bearer:

"Draw thy sword and thrust me through, lest the Philistines thrust me through and make a mock of me."

But his armor-bearer would not, wherefore Saul took his sword and fell upon it himself, and when his armor-bearer

saw that Saul was dead, he likewise fell upon his sword and died with him.

And the Philistines followed hard upon Saul and his three sons, and as they were too late to kill the king they slew his sons, Abinadab, Malchi-shua and the noble-hearted Jonathan. And when the men of Israel that were on the other side of the valley, and they that were beyond Jordan saw that the men of Israel fled, and that Saul and his sons were dead, they too forsook their cities and fled, and the Philistines came and dwelt in them.

And it came to pass on the morrow, when the Philistines came to strip the slain on the battle-field, that they found Saul and his three sons fallen in Mount Gilboa, and they cut off Saul's head, and stripped off his armor, and sent into their own land roundabout to carry the tidings unto the house of their idols and to the people. And they put his armor into the house of Ashtaroth and fastened his body to the wall of Beth-shan.

But they did not keep those trophies long, for when the men of Jabesh-Gilead heard of this dishonor put on their king, all the valiant men among them arose and they went all night, and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth-shan, and carried them back to Jabesh and burnt them there. And they buried their bones under a tamarisk tree in Jabesh, and fasted seven days in token of mourning.

And it came to pass after the death of Saul, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites and had been two days in Ziklag, that behold a man came out of the camp of Saul with his clothes rent and earth upon his head, and when he came to David he fell to the earth and did obeisance. And David said unto him:

"From whence comest thou?"

And he answered:

"Out of the camp of Israel am I escaped."

Then asked David, eagerly:

"How went the matter? I pray thee tell me."

And he answered:

"The people are fled from the battle, and many of the people also are fallen and dead; and Saul and Jonathan his son are dead also."

Then when David asked:

"How knowest thou that Saul and Jonathan be dead?" the young man thought that here was his chance to get into favor with David, for it never occurred to him that David would not rejoice to hear of Saul's death, with whom he had been so long at enmity. So he invented a pretty story, saying:

"As I happened by chance upon Mount Gilboa, behold Saul leaned upon his spear; and lo, the chariots and the horsemen followed hard after him. And when he looked behind him he saw me, and called unto me. And I answered, 'Here am I.' And he said unto me, 'Who art thou?' And I answered him, 'I am an Amalekite.' And he said, 'Stand, I pray thee, beside me, and slay me, for anguish hath taken hold of me, because my life is yet whole in me.' So I stood beside him and slew him, because I was sure that he could not live after he was fallen: and I took the crown that was upon his head and the bracelet that was on his arm, and have brought them hither unto my lord."

Here he paused, quite out of breath, and did indeed present to David a crown and bracelet; but David, far from seeming pleased, took hold on his clothes and rent them; and likewise all the men that were with him; and they mourned and wept and fasted until even for Saul and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of the Lord and the house of Israel, because they were fallen by the sword.

And the next day David sent for the bearer of the ill tidings, and he came, not feeling quite so content as on yesterday with what he had told.

And David asked him, with suspicious quietness:

"Whence art thou?"

And the young man answered:

"I am the son of a stranger, an Amalekite."

And David said sternly:

"How wast thou not afraid to put forth thine hand to destroy the Lord's anointed?" and calling to one of his followers, he bade him, "Go near and fall upon him;" which the young man did so readily that the Amalekite dropped dead on the spot, without ever having a chance to deny his foolish story. And David, seeing him dead at his feet, said:

"Thy blood be upon thy head: for thy mouth hath testified against thee, saying, 'I have slain the Lord's anointed.' "

Here is a song which David made in lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan, his faithful friend, and which he had taught to all the Children of Judah:

"Thy glory, O Israel, is slain upon thy high places!
How are the mighty fallen!
Tell it not in Gath,
Publish it not in the streets of Askelon;
Lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice;
Lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.
Ye mountains of Gilboa,
Let there be no dew nor rain upon you, neither fields of offerings;
For there the shield of the mighty was vilely cast away,
The shield of Saul, as of one not anointed with oil.
From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty,
The bow of Jonathan turned not back,

And the sword of Saul returned not empty.
Saul and Jonathan were lovely in their lives,
And in their death they were not divided;
They were swifter than eagles,
They were stronger than lions.
Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul,
Who clothed you in scarlet delicately,
Who put ornaments of gold upon your apparel.
How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle!
Jonathan is slain upon thy high places!
I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan:
Very pleasant hast thou been unto me:
Thy love to me was wonderful,
Passing the love of women.
How are the mighty fallen,
And the weapons of war perished!"

CHAPTER XXI

DAVID MADE KING

Now, Saul being dead, and also Jonathan and his other two sons, there was no king for a time over Israel, and many turned to David as their natural ruler. He himself was in great doubt as to what he should do, but a dream determined his course of action. He thought that God came to him one night, and that he told Him of his perplexity, and asked:

"Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah?" and the Lord answered him:

"Go up."

Then he asked:

"Whither shall I go up?" meaning to which city; and the Lord said:

"Unto Hebron."

Hebron, if you remember, was Abraham's home, and one of the oldest towns in Canaan. "So David went up thither, and his two wives also, Ahinoam, the Jezreelitess, and Abigail, the wife of Nabal the Carmelite. And his men that were with him did David bring up, every man with his household, and they dwelt in Hebron." And all the men of the tribe of Judah came to David, and anointed him king over them.

His first royal act proved the wisdom of their choice, for when he learned from the men of Judah how the men of Jabesh-Gilead had buried King Saul, he sent messengers unto them, saying:

"Blessed be ye of the Lord, that ye have showed this kindness unto your lord, even unto Saul, and have buried him. And now the Lord show kindness and truth unto you: and I also will requite you this kindness, because ye have done this thing. Now, therefore, let your hands be strong and be ye valiant: for Saul your lord is dead, and also the house of Judah have anointed me king over them."

Now, though Judah had welcomed David as king, the rest of the tribes had taken sides against him, and it is here that we first begin to see the division of Israel into two great parties, the powerful house of Judah giving its name to all the people of the south, and the rest of the tribes grouping themselves under the original name of Israel.

Though Saul and three of his sons had been killed in battle there were still claimants of his blood to the throne, the foremost being another son of his called Ish-bosheth, or by some chroniclers Esh-baal. After the disastrous battle of Mount Gilboa, Abner, Saul's great general, the captain of his host, as he was called then, had taken this Ish-bosheth and brought him to Mahanaim, and made him king over all Israel except Judah, which had already recognized David.

Now, after a time Joab, the chief minister of King David, and Abner, the general of King Ish-bosheth, agreed to have a conference to see if they could arrange a reconciliation between their masters, and they met them together by the pool of Gideon followed by a great host of their followers, and sat down, the one on the one side of the pool and the other on the other side of the pool.

Abner was the first to speak. He said to Joab:

"Let the young men, I pray thee, arise and play before us," which was a wickedly foolish proposition, for

"playing" meant that the young men should fight each other to the death. However, Joab agreed, saying:

"Let them arise."

And twelve youths of the house of Judah arose at his word and went out to meet twelve of Ish-bosheth's servants. "And they caught every one his fellow by the head, and thrust his sword in his fellow's side; so they fell down together: wherefore that place was called Helkath-hazzurim," which means "the field of the sharp knives."

After the twenty-four unfortunate young men had all been killed, the fighting became general, and the battle was very sore that day, until at last Abner and his men were beaten before the servants of David, and Abner fled away. But one man followed him. This was Asahel, the brother of Joab. Joab and Abishai and Asahel were sons of Zeruiah, and were all prominent among David's followers, Asahel in particular being famous for his running, "as light of foot as a wild roe."

And Asahel pursued after Abner; and in going he turned not to the right hand nor to the left from following Abner. Then Abner looked behind him, and said:

"Is it thou, Asahel?"

And he answered:

"It is I."

And Abner said to him:

"Turn thee aside to thy right hand or to thy left, and lay thou hold on one of the young men, and take thou his armor."

This he said hoping to divert him; but Asahel would not turn aside from following of him. Then he said again to him:

"Turn thee aside from following me: wherefore should I smite thee to the ground? How then should I hold up my face to Joab, thy brother?"

But Asahel would not turn back. Then Abner, seeing no other way to get rid of him, turned and smote him in the belly with the hinder end of his spear, and with such force that the spear came out behind him; and he fell down there and died in the same place; and it came to pass that as many of David's men as came to the place where Asahel was lying dead stood still there, only his brothers Joab and Abishai went on after Abner. "And the sun went down when they came to the hill of Ammah, that lieth before Giah by the way of the wilderness of Gibeon." And on top of this hill stood Abner, safely surrounded by a band of the men of Benjamin, and he called to Joab, saying:

"Shall the sword devour forever? Knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end? How long shall it be then, ere thou bid the people return from following their brethren?"

But Joab answered, with some reason:

"As God liveth, if thou hadst not spoken, surely then in the morning the people had gone away, nor followed every one his brother."

Joab and Abishai saw, however, that Abner was safe from them this time, and Joab felt obliged to blow the trumpet of retreat; and all the people stood still, and pursued after Israel no more, neither fought they any more, and Abner and his men went back that night to Mahanaim.

And when Joab returned from following Abner and could take note of his losses, there only lacked of David's servants nineteen besides Asahel; but of Abner's men three hundred and three-score lay dead. And they took up Asahel, and buried him in the sepulchre of his father, which was in Bethlehem, and afterwards Joab and his men marched all night, until "the day broke upon them at Hebron."

Now after this there was long war between the house of David and the house of Saul; and David waxed stronger and stronger, but the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker. David continued to live in Hebron, where many sons were born to him, the most famous among them being Amnon and Absalom. We shall hear more of them later on.

The feud was finally brought to an end, as so many feuds are, by a home quarrel between the supporters of one side. Ish-bosheth, who seems to have been a weak and foolish young man, had not the wisdom to see that the success of his cause depended entirely on Abner, and he took offense at some act of his captain's, and undertook to call him to account for it. Abner, who was old enough to be Ish-bosheth's father, and who felt that Ish-bosheth owed his kingdom to him, was naturally aggrieved at such conduct.

"Am I a dog's head that belongeth to Judah?" he said, angrily. "This day do I show kindness unto the house of Saul, thy father, to his brethren and to his friends, and have not delivered them into the hand of David, and yet thou chargest me with a fault! God do so to Abner, and more also, if, as the Lord hath sworn to David, I do not even so to him; to translate the kingdom from the house of Saul and to set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan to Beersheba."

And Ish-bosheth could not answer Abner another word, because he feared him.

Abner gave his anger no time to cool, but sent messengers hurrying off to David, saying:

"Whose is the land? Make thy league with me, and behold, my hand shall be with thee, to bring about all Israel unto thee."

David considered this proposition, and sent word to Abner finally:

"Well; I will make a league with thee: but one thing I require of thee, that is, thou shalt not see my face, except thou first bring Michal, Saul's daughter."

You remember Michal had been David's first wife, but many years had passed since that night when she let David down through her window with a rope, and in the meantime Saul, her father, had married her to another man, called Paltiel, the son of Laish, and she had almost forgotten David. Now, however, when David sent to Ishbosheth, saying:

"Deliver me my wife Michal," the poor king dared not refuse, but sent and took her from her husband, even from Paltiel. He, poor man, went with her on her way to Hebron, weeping as he went, even as far as Bahurim. Then said Abner unto him:

"Go, return;" and he returned.

Meanwhile Abner had communication with the elders of Israel, saying:

"In times past ye sought for David to be king over you; now, then, do it; for the Lord will save you from the Philistines by the hand of David."

And he spoke in the same wise to the men of Benjamin. Then he went to David at Hebron to tell him all that he had done, taking twenty men with him, and David made Abner and his sons a feast; and when it was finished Abner said:

"I will arise and go, and will gather all Israel unto my lord the king (meaning David this time when he said "king"), that they may make a covenant with thee, and that thou mayest reign over all that thy soul desireth."

And David sent Abner away, and he went in peace.

Probably all would not have gone so smoothly if Joab had been at home at the time of Abner's visit, but he was away with his troops on a foray, and they only returned

after Abner had departed, bringing with them a great spoil. Of course, the first news that Joab heard on entering Hebron was of Abner's visit, and of the feast David had made for him, and he hurried at once to the king, saying:

"What hast thou done? Behold, Abner came unto thee; why is it that thou hast sent him away, and he is quite gone? Thou knowest Abner, the son of Ner, that he came to deceive thee and to know thy going out and thy coming in, and to know all that thou doest;" for Joab had never forgiven Abner for Asahel's death, and could believe no good of him. He wasted no more time in reproach, but rushed out from his master's presence, and without waiting for permission, sent messengers after Abner to bring him back. They caught up with him at the well of Sirah, and returned with him to Hebron before David knew that they had been sent. And when they entered the city Joab was waiting in the midst of the gate, and he took Abner aside, as if to speak to him quietly, and then smote and killed him, for the blood of Asahel his brother.

When King David heard of the murder he was terribly distressed.

"I and my kingdom are guiltless before the Lord forever from the blood of Abner, the son of Ner," he cried; "let it fall upon the head of Joab and upon all his father's house."

And he commanded Joab and all his men to rend their clothes and gird them with sackcloth, and mourn for Abner, and he himself followed the bier to the grave. And they buried Abner at Hebron; and the king lifted up his voice and wept at the grave and all the people wept. And the king lamented for Abner, and said:

"Should Abner die as a fool dieth?
Thy hands were not bound, nor thy feet put into fetters:

As a man falleth before the children of iniquity, so didst thou fall."

And all the people wept again over him. And as fasting was the great sign of mourning, David, to show his grief, went without food, and when the people urged him to eat, he said:

"God do so to me and more also if I taste bread or aught else till the sun be down."

And all the people took note of the king's behavior, and it pleased them, as whatsoever the king did pleased all the people. And all Israel understood that day that it was not of the king to slay Abner the son of Ner, for he said unto his servants:

"Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?"

When Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, heard that Abner was dead in Hebron, his hands became feeble, and all the Israelites were troubled. I suppose that means that he was more than ever unfit to govern, for at this time we hear of a great conspiracy formed against him by two of his captains, Baanah and Rechab, men belonging to the tribe of Benjamin. They resolved to get rid of Ish-bosheth, and to put in his place the only son of Jonathan. This was a poor little boy named Mephibosheth, or Merib-baal. He was lame, for when he was only five years old the tidings came of the death of Saul and Jonathan on Mount Gilboa, and his nurse took him up and fled in fear of the Philistines; and it came to pass as she made haste to flee that he fell and became lame in both his feet. He was too small to care about the throne, but Rechab and Baanah protested that they had his interests at heart. They came about the heat of the day to the house of Ish-bosheth, as he was taking his rest at noon. And behold the woman that kept the door of the house was winnowing wheat, and

she slumbered and slept over her task, and Rechab and Baanah went privily into the house, and made their way to the bedroom of Ish-bosheth, where they found him lying on his bed. Before he could call for help they smote him and slew him, and beheaded him, and then, carrying his head with them, they escaped from the house, and went by the way of Arabah all night to Hebron. There they expected a reward from David. But when they brought the head of their victim before the king, and said to him:

"Behold the head of Ish-bosheth, the son of Saul, thine enemy, which sought thy life;" he was exceedingly angry, and answered the murderers:

"As the Lord liveth, who hath redeemed my soul out of all adversity, when one told me, saying, 'Behold, Saul is dead,' thinking to have brought good tidings, I took hold of him and slew him in Ziklag, which was the reward I gave him for his tidings. How much more when wicked men have slain a righteous person in his own house upon his bed, shall I not now require his blood of your hands, and take you away from the earth?"

Wherefore David commanded his young men, and they slew Rechab and Baanah, and cut off their hands and feet and hanged them up beside the pool of Hebron. Then they took the head of the unhappy Ish-bosheth and buried it in the grave of Abner.

After this all the tribes of Israel gave in their allegiance to David. They came to Hebron, saying:

"Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh. In time past, when Saul was king over us, it was thou that leddest out and broughtest in Israel: and the Lord said to thee: 'Thou shalt feed my people Israel and thou shalt be leader over Israel.'"

And they anointed David king over all Israel as well as Judah. At this time he was thirty years old, and he con-

tinued to reign for forty years. He made Jerusalem his capital city, and built a great fortress there, and his fame waxed greater and greater in all the counties round about, and because they had no expert builders in Canaan, "Hiram, the king of Tyre, sent messengers unto David, and cedar trees, and carpenters and masons; and they built David an house." Think what a sweet smelling home, built all of cedar wood!

The Philistines were jealous of this increasing power, and came up and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim to fight Israel; but David defeated them in two great battles, at Baal-perazim and at Geba, and drove them back to their own country.

Now, during all this time, if you remember, the Ark of the Lord had been left at the house of Abinadab in the hill; but now when David was free from his enemies and settled in his new city, he thought the time had come to give it a permanent resting-place; so he arose and went with all the people that were with him from Baale-Judah, to bring up from thence the Ark of God. And they set the Ark upon a new cart and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that was in the hill; and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drave the new cart. And David and all the house of Israel went ahead, playing before the Lord with all manner of instruments made of fir wood, and with harps and with psalteries, and with timbrels and with castanets, and with cymbals. And when they came to the threshing floor of Nachon, the oxen who were drawing the cart stumbled, and Uzzah put forth his hand to steady the Ark of God, but no sooner had he touched it than he fell dead, and the people all thought it was because the Lord was displeased with him. And they were afraid to carry the Ark any further, so they left it in the house of a man called Obed-edom, who was a Gittite and not a Hebrew, and con-

sequently had no feeling about the Ark one way or the other. There they left it three months, until word was brought to the king:

"The Lord hath blessed the house of Obed-edom and all that pertaineth unto him, because of the Ark of God."

Then the people were no longer afraid, and David went up and brought the Ark of God with great rejoicings to Jerusalem, sacrificing an ox and a fatling every six paces along the way, and dancing himself before the Lord with all his might, dressed in a linen ephod, like a priest, while all the people shouted and the trumpets sounded.

The Israelites, like the old Greeks, danced and sang at their religious festivals, but this was the first time that a king had himself joined in the dancing, and it was so as the Ark of the Lord came into Jerusalem, that Michal, the daughter of Saul, looked out at the window, and when she saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord she despised him in her heart. But the procession swept past her, and they brought in the Ark, and set it in its place in the midst of the tent that David had pitched for it; and David offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings before the Lord, and blessed the people in the name of the Lord of Hosts. And he dealt among all the people, even among the whole multitude of Israel, both to men and women, to every one a cake of bread, and a portion of wine and a cake of raisins, and all the people departed, every one to his own house.

Then David returned to bless his own household, and Michal, as she saw him coming, could no longer hide her anger and contempt. Perhaps she had not forgiven David for taking her away from her second husband, Paltiel. However that may have been, as David entered his house she advanced to meet him, saying sarcastically:

"How glorious was the king of Israel to-day, who made

himself as one of the shameless vain fellows before the eyes of the handmaids of his servants!"

But David answered her seriously:

"It was the Lord which chose me above thy father and above all his house to appoint me prince over the people of the Lord, over Israel: therefore will I play before the Lord. And I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight, but of the handmaids which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honor."

Michal dared say no more; but as she never had any more children, the people who had witnessed the scene used to say that the Lord had punished her because of her sullen behavior to David.

Later on, David, at the suggestion of the prophet Nathan, built a house for the Ark of the Lord, but it was left to his son to make a Temple for it that became famous the world over.

Now all things prospered with David, and he gained great victories everywhere. He smote the Philistines, and took away the bridle of their mother-city as a trophy, and he conquered the Moabites, and made them his servants; and from Rehob, the king of Zobak, he took one thousand seven hundred horsemen and twenty thousand foot; he houghed all the chariot horses, but reserved enough of them for a hundred chariots. Zobah called on the Syrians for help, but when they came down the Israelites killed twenty-two thousand of them and put garrisons in Syria of Damascus, and made the Syrians bring presents to them, and they brought home shields of gold to hang up in Jerusalem as tokens of their victory, and exceeding much brass and vessels of silver and of gold, and all these David dedicated to the service of the Lord.

Then having had success among all his enemies, David bethought himself of a good work at home, and he inquired:

"Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?"

And there was of the house of Saul a servant whose name was Ziba, and they called him unto David; and the king said unto him:

"Art thou Ziba?"

And he said:

"Thy servant is he."

Wherefore David repeated his question to him:

"Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may show the kindness of God unto him?"

And Ziba answered:

"Jonathan hath yet a son, which is lame on his feet."

Then said the king:

"Where is he?"

And Ziba told him that he was in the house of one Machir the son of Ammiel, in a place called Lo-debar, and David sent at once to fetch him from thence.

When Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, was brought before the king, he fell on his face and did obeisance, and David said unto him:

"Mephibosheth!"

And he answered:

"Behold thy servant."

And David said unto him:

"Fear not, for surely I will show thee kindness for Jonathan, thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father, and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually."

And Mephibosheth did obeisance again, and said humbly:

"What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?"

Then the king called to Ziba, Saul's servant, and said unto him:

"All that pertained to Saul and to all his house have I given unto thy master's son. And thou shalt till the land for him, thou and thy sons and thy servants, and thou shalt bring in the fruits, that thy master's son may have bread to eat, but Mephibosheth, thy master's son, shall eat bread alway at my table, as one of the king's sons."

Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants, and he said unto the king:

"According to all that my lord the king commandeth his servant, so shall thy servant do."

And all that dwelt in the house of Ziba were servants unto Mephibosheth. So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem; for he did eat continually at the king's table, and he was lame on both his feet.

CHAPTER XXII

THE STORY OF BATHSHEBA

Soon after David's recognition of Mephibosheth, he found himself involved in a great war with the Children of Ammon and the Syrians. The difficulty arose when Nahash, the king of the Ammonites, died, and Hanun his son reigned in his stead. As Nahash had always been a good friend to David, he said to himself:

"I will show kindness unto Hanun the son of Nahash, as his father showed kindness unto me;" and he sent by the hand of his servants to comfort King Hanun concerning his father. But when David's servants came into the country of the Ammonites the prince of the land said unto Hanun their lord:

"Thinkest thou that David doth honor thy father, that he hath sent comforters unto thee? Hath not David sent his servants unto thee to search the city, and to spy it out and to overthrow it?"

And Hanun listened to these evil counsellors, and he took David's messengers, and shaved off the one half of their beards, and cut off their garments in the middle, and sent them away in this humiliating condition. The ambassadors were ashamed to return home, but they sent word to David of the insult offered to them, and to him through them, and by the king's orders they tarried in Jericho until their beards were grown.

Meanwhile the Ammonites perceived that they were become odious to David, and foreseeing a war they sent and

hired allies, as was the custom of that time; of the Syrians of Beth-reboh and of the Syrians of Zobah, twenty thousand footmen, and a thousand of the men of Maacah, with their king at their head, and of the men of Tob twelve thousand men. And when David heard of it he sent Joab to meet them with all the host of the mighty men. And the Children of Ammon came out and put the battle in array at the entering in of the gate; and the Syrians of Zobah and of Rehob, and the men of Tob and Maacah were by themselves in the field. Now when Joab saw that the battle was set against him before and behind, he chose of all the choice men of Israel and put them in array against the Syrians; and the rest of the people he committed into the hand of Abishai, his brother, and he put them in array against the Children of Ammon. And Joab said unto Abishai:

"If the Syrian be too strong for me, then thou shalt help me: but if the Children of Ammon be too strong for thee, then I will come and help thee. Be of good courage and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God: and the Lord do that which seemeth him good."

Then Joab and the people that were with him drew nigh unto the battle against the Syrians; and they fled before him. And when the Children of Ammon saw that the Syrians were fled, they likewise fled before Abishai, and entered into the city; and Joab and the Israelites returned triumphant to Jerusalem.

But the Syrians were not yet vanquished. When they saw that they were put to the worse before Israel, they gathered themselves together and sent to Hadarezer for help. Hadarezer was the king of the Syrians beyond the river (Euphrates); and sent a large army led by Shobach, one of his captains, to meet the other Syrians at Helam.

When David heard this he gathered all Israel together,

and passed over Jordan and came to Helam, where he fought the Syrians without delay, and with such success that they fled before him, leaving Shobach, their captain, dead on the field of battle. We are told that on this occasion the Israelites slew of the Syrians the men of seven hundred chariots, and forty thousand horsemen, and that when the news of the victory spread all the kings that were servants to Hadarezer made peace with Israel. So the Syrians feared to help the Children of Ammon any more, and it came to pass, at the return of the year, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the Children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah, their chief city.

But David tarried at Jerusalem, and it was during these days when most of the people were away in the land of Ammon that he first met the woman who afterwards became the mother of the great King Solomon. She was called Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite, and she was very beautiful to look upon. David loved her from the first moment he saw her, and wished to make her his wife, but unhappily she was already married. Her husband was away at the war with Joab. Now David, in order to get rid of him and marry Bathsheba, had recourse to a very unworthy course of action, and one for which he was well punished later. He wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the very hand of Uriah, who had been home on a short visit and was about to return to the war, and in the letter he said:

"Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten and die."

And it came to pass that when Joab kept watch upon the city (of Rabbah) that he assigned Uriah unto the place where he knew the valiant men were, and the men of the city came out and fought with Joab; and there fell some of

the people, even of the servants of David; and Uriah the Hittite died also. Then Joab sent word and told David all the things concerning the war; and he charged the messenger, saying:

"When thou hast made an end of telling all the things concerning the war unto the king, it shall be that, if the king's wrath arise, and he say unto thee, 'Wherefore went ye so nigh unto the city to fight? Knew ye not that they would shoot from the wall? Who smote Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? Did not a woman cast an upper millstone upon him from the wall, that he died at Thebez? Why went ye so nigh the wall?' Then shalt thou say, 'Thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also'."

So the messenger went, and came and showed David all that Joab had sent him for. And the messenger said unto David:

"The men prevailed against us, and came out against us into the field, and we were upon them even unto the entering of the gate. And the shooters shot at thy servants from off the wall; and some of the king's servants be dead, and thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also."

To the messenger's surprise, David showed no anger at this news. On the contrary, he bade him return to Joab and say unto him:

"Let not this thing displease thee, for the sword devoureth one as well as another: make thy battle more strong against the city and overthrow it."

Then the news was sent to Bathsheba of her husband's death, and she made lamentation for him; and when the mourning was past, David sent and took her home to his house, and she became his wife. But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord, and he was bitterly punished for his evil conduct.

His first reproof came from Nathan the prophet. This

holy man stood before David and told him a sad story which he pretended concerned one of David's subjects.

"There were two men in one city," he said, as if he were stating a true case for David's judgment, "the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds: but the poor man had nothing save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; and it did eat of his own morsels, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom and was unto him as a daughter.

"And there came a traveler unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flocks and of his own herds to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him, but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him."

When the prophet ceased speaking, David was full of righteous indignation. His anger was greatly kindled against the man in the story, and he said to Nathan:

"As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this is worthy to die: and he shall return the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing and because he had no pity."

Then said Nathan to David:

"Thou art the man. Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, 'I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; and I gave thee thy master's house and the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little I would have called unto thee such and such things.' Wherefore hast thou despised the word of the Lord, to do that which is evil in his sight? Thou hast smitten Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the Children of Ammon."

And David said unto Nathan:

"I have sinned against the Lord," and for the first time he began to be sorry for what he had done. And when Nathan saw that he repented, he said to him:

"The Lord hath put away (or forgiven) thy sin: thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die."

And Nathan departed unto his house, leaving David sad at heart, for the child Nathan had spoken of was Bathsheba's son, and David loved him very dearly. Soon after Nathan's visit the child fell ill, and David besought God for him, and he fasted and went in and lay all night upon the earth; and the elders of his house arose, and stood beside him, to raise him up from the earth; but he would not, neither did he eat bread with them. And it came to pass on the seventh day that the child died, and the servants of David feared to tell him that the child was dead, for they said:

"Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spake unto him, and he hearkened not unto our voice; how then shall we tell him that the child is dead, so that he do himself some harm?"

But when David saw that his servants whispered together, he perceived that the child was dead, and he said unto them:

"Is the child dead?"

And they said:

"He is dead."

Then David arose from the earth and washed and anointed himself, and changed his apparel; and he came into the house of the Lord and worshiped. Then he came to his own house, and when he required they set bread before him, and he did eat. Then said his servants to him:

"What thing is this that thou hast done? Thou didst

fast and weep for the child while it was alive; but when the child was dead thou didst rise and eat bread."

And he answered them:

"While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, 'Who knoweth whether the Lord will not be gracious unto me, that the child may live?' But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."

And David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and in time she had another son, and they called his name Solomon. And the Lord loved him; and he sent by the hand of Nathan the prophet, and they called his name Jedidiah also, or "The Beloved of Jah," for the Lord's sake.

Soon after this Joab succeeded in taking Rabbah, the royal city of the Ammonites, and he sent word unto David:

"I have fought against Rabbah; yea, I have taken the city of waters. Now therefore gather the rest of the people together, and encamp against the city and take it; lest I take the city and it be called after my name."

For it was a faithful servant's duty in these days to give all possible glory to his master.

In answer to his message David did gather the people together, and went to Rabbah and fought against the city and took it. And he took the crown of their king from off his head; and the weight thereof was a talent of gold, and in it were precious stones; and it was set upon David's head. And he brought forth the spoil of the city, exceeding much. And he brought forth the people that were therein, and put them under saws and under harrows of iron and under axes of iron, and made them to labor at the brick-kiln; and thus did he unto all the cities of the Children of Ammon.

And David and all his people returned unto Jerusalem, and so was the war with the Ammonites brought to an end.

CHAPTER XXIII

ABSALOM

We are now coming to the most serious trouble of David's life, for there may be some excitement and even pleasure found in fighting one's enemies, but to be at war with one's own children brings only distress and bitterness of heart.

You remember that David had had two sons born to him in Hebron whose names were Absalom and Amnon. Many years had passed, and they were now full-grown young men, but though brothers, they were not friends, for Amnon had bitterly injured Absalom on one occasion, and in the two intervening years Absalom had not spoken unto Amnon either good or bad, for he hated Amnon.

Now it came to pass about this time that Absalom had sheep-shearers in Baal-hazor, which is beside Ephraim, and he invited all the king's sons to come up and celebrate with him the festival at the end of the shearing.

He came to David and said:

"Behold now thy servant hath sheep-shearers; let the king, I pray thee, and his servants go with thy servant."

But the king answered him:

"Nay, my son, let us not all go, lest we be burdensome unto thee."

And Absalom pressed him; howbeit he would not go, but blessed him. Then said his son:

"If not, I pray thee, let my brother Amnon go with us."

And the king said:

"Why should he go with thee?"

But when Absalom urged him, he let Amnon and all the king's sons go.

Then Absalom commanded his servants, saying:

"Mark ye now, when Amnon's heart is merry with wine; and when I say unto you, 'Smite Amnon,' then kill him, fear not: have not I commanded you? Be courageous and valiant."

And the servants of Absalom did unto Amnon as Absalom had commanded. Then all the king's sons arose, and every man gat him upon his mule and fled. And it came to pass, while they were on their way, that the tidings came to David that Absalom had slain all the king's sons and that there was not one left. Then the king arose and rent his garments and lay on the earth; and all his servants stood by with their clothes rent also; until Jonadab, the king's brother, entered in haste, saying:

"Let not my lord suppose that they have killed all the young men, the king's sons; for Amnon only is dead. Now therefore let not my lord the king take the thing to his heart, to think that all the king's sons are dead; for Amnon only is dead."

But Absalom fled. And the young man that kept watch in the city lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold, there came up much people by way of the hillside behind him. And Jonadab said unto the king:

"Behold, the king's sons are come: as thy servant said, so it is."

And as he made an end of speaking, behold, the king's sons came, and lifted up their voice, and wept, and the king also and all his servants wept very sore.

But Absalom escaped and went to seek refuge with Talmai, the king of Geshur, where he continued for three years.

Meanwhile David mourned every day for Amnon, but in time he was comforted for him, and the soul of the king longed to go forth unto Absalom, for he knew that Absalom's provocation had been very great. Still he knew not how to forgive him, fearing to seem too lenient.

Now Joab perceived that the king's heart was toward Absalom, and he thought of a way to help his master. He sent to Tekoa and fetched thence a wise woman or witch, and bid her feign to be a mourner, and put on mourning apparel and be as a woman that had a long time mourned for the dead. Then Joab put words in her mouth, that is, he told her what to say.

And when the woman of Tekoa was come before the king she fell on her face to the ground and did obeisance, and said:

"Help, O king!"

And the king said unto her:

"What aileth thee?"

And she answered:

"Of a truth I am a widow woman, and mine husband is dead. And thy handmaid had two sons, and they two strove together in the field, and there was none to part them, but the one smote the other and killed him. And behold, the whole family is risen against thine handmaid, and they said, 'Deliver him that smote his brother, that we may kill him for the life of his brother whom he slew, and so we shall destroy the heir also:' thus shall they quench my coal which is left, and shall leave to my husband neither name nor remainder upon the face of the earth."

Then said David unto the woman:

"Go to thine house and I will give charge concerning thee, and whosoever saith aught against thee, bring him to me, and he shall not touch thee any more."

And she besought him:

"I pray thee, let the king remember the Lord thy God, that the avenger of blood destroy not any more, lest thou destroy my son."

And the king said:

"As the Lord liveth, there shall not one hair of thy son fall to the ground."

Then the woman said, timidly:

"Let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak a word unto my Lord the king."

And he said:

"Say on."

And she said:

"Wherefore then hast thou devised such a thing against the people of God? For in speaking this word the king is as one which is guilty, in that the king doth not fetch home again his banished one. For we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God take away life, but deviseth means that he that is banished be not an outcast from him. Then let, I pray thee, the word of my lord the king be comfortable: for as an angel of God, so is my lord the king to discern good and bad; and the Lord thy God be with thee."

Then David answered and said:

"Hide not from me, I pray thee, aught that I shall ask thee."

And the woman said:

"Let my lord the king now speak."

And he asked her:

"Is the hand of Joab with thee in all this?"

And she answered:

"As thy soul liveth, my lord the king, none can turn to the right hand or to the left from aught that my lord the king hath spoken: for thy servant Joab he bade me, and he put all these words in the mouth of thine handmaid:

and my lord is wise, according to the wisdom of an angel of God, to know all things that are in the earth."

Then the king sent for Joab and said:

"Behold now, thou hast done this thing: go, therefore, bring the young man Absalom again."

And Joab fell to the ground on his face and did obeisance, and blessed the king, and said:

"To-day thy servant knoweth that I have found grace in thy sight, my lord, O king, in that the king hath performed the request of his servant."

And Joab arose and went to Geshur and brought Absalom to Jerusalem. But David was not altogether prepared to forgive his son even yet, and he commanded concerning him:

"Let him turn to his own house, but let him not see my face."

So Absalom turned to his own house, but saw not the king's face.

Now in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty; from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him. And when he polled his head (that is, shaved it), (now, it was at every year's end that he polled it: because the hair was heavy on him, therefore he polled it) he weighed the hair of his head at two hundred shekels, after the king's weight. And what with being so beautiful and being also the king's son, Absalom had grown somewhat proud and overbearing. He dwelt two full years in Jerusalem, and then as his father still refused to see him, his patience became exhausted and he sent for Joab, meaning to make him intercede for him with the king. But Joab guessed what he wanted, and would not come. Then he sent a second time, and still Joab stayed away, and at that Absalom became exceedingly irritated, and he sent his

servants to set fire to one of Joab's fields of barley that lay near his own land.

At that Joab came in all haste to Absalom's house, demanding:

"Wherefore have thy servants set my field on fire?"

And Absalom answered:

"Behold, I sent unto thee, saying, 'Come hither, that I may send thee unto the king to say, "Wherefore am I come from Geshur? It were better for me to be there still." ' Now therefore let me see the king's face; or if there be iniquity in me, let him kill me."

So Joab, finding Absalom so much in earnest, consented to go for him to the king, and when he told David what Absalom had said, David called for his son. And he came to the king and bowed himself on his face to the ground before him, and the king kissed Absalom and they were reconciled.

Absalom made but a poor return for his father's clemency, however, for as he grew older he fell more and more in love with the idea of power, and finally came to covet the throne itself. And with the end in view of making himself king over Israel, he sought to become popular with all men. He prepared him a chariot and horses and fifty men to run before, in order to dazzle the eyes of the people, and then he would rise up early and stand beside the way of the gate; and it was so, that when any man had a suit which should come to the king for judgment, Absalom would call unto him:

"Of what city art thou?"

And when the man answered:

"Thy servant is of one of the tribes of Israel;" Absalom would say:

"See, thy matters are good and right; but there is no man deputed of the king to hear thee."

And he said moreover:

"Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice!"

Then when any man drew nigh to do him obeisance, Absalom would put forth his hands and take hold of him and kiss him. And in this manner did he steal the hearts of the men of Israel.

And it came to pass at the end of four years that Absalom said unto the king:

"I pray thee let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed unto the Lord in Hebron. For thy servant vowed a vow while I abode at Geshur in Syria, saying, 'If the Lord shall indeed bring me again to Jerusalem, then will I worship the Lord.' "

And the king, who suspected nothing, bade Absalom go in peace; so he arose and went to Hebron, but not to serve the Lord. For he sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying:

"As soon as ye hear the sound of the trumpet, then ye shall say, 'Absalom is king in Hebron'."

And with Absalom went two hundred men out of Jerusalem, that were invited, and went in their simplicity; and they knew not anything of Absalom's scheme.

Then Absalom sent for Ahithophel, David's counsellor, from his city, even from Giloh, and the conspiracy waxed strong, for the people increased continually with Absalom, and threatened the safety of David if he continued in Jerusalem. At last a messenger came to the king, saying:

"The hearts of all the men of Israel are after Absalom."

And the king said unto all his servants that were with him:

"Arise and let us flee; for else none of us shall escape from Absalom: make speed to depart, lest he overtake us

quickly, and bring down evil upon us, and smite the city with the edge of the sword."

And they answered:

"Behold, thy servants are ready to do whatsoever my lord the king shall choose."

And the king went forth, and all his household after him, and they tarried that night at Beth-merhak or the Far House, and the next day they all passed over the brook Kidron, on their way to the wilderness. The king's servants and six hundred of his men from Gath passed over before, and as they were filing past the king he observed among them a stranger who had been by chance in Jerusalem when the news of the conspiracy came. He was called Ittai, and was a Gittite. Then said David to him:

"Wherefore goest thou also with us? Return and abide with the king (he spoke bitterly, meaning Absalom) for thou art a stranger and also an exile; return to thine own place. Whereas thou camest but yesterday, should I this day make thee go up and down with us, seeing I go whither I may? Return thou and take back thy brethren; mercy and truth be with thee."

But the man would not desert David.

"As the Lord liveth," he said, "and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether for death or for life, even there also will thy servant be."

And David said to Ittai:

"Go, and pass over;" and then he himself passed over with all his men and all the little ones that were with him, and all the country wept with a loud voice as they went over Kidron and made their way toward the wilderness.

Then came Zadok, the head priest, following him, and all the other Levites or priests, bearing the Ark of the Covenant of God, but David said to them:

"Carry back the Ark of God into the city: if I shall find favor in the sight of the Lord, he will bring me again, and shew me both it and his habitation: but if he say thus, 'I have no delight in thee;' behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him."

Zadok therefore and Ahimaaz his son, and Jonathan the son of Abiathar, took back the Ark to Jerusalem, and abode there with it.

And David went up by the ascent of the Mount of Olives, and wept as he went up; and he had his head covered and went barefoot; and all the people that were with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went.

And one told David, saying:

"Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom."

And David said:

"O Lord, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness;" and when, a little later, a faithful servant of his called Hushai the Archite came to join his little band, with his coat rent and earth upon his head in token of lamentation, David bade him return to Jerusalem and stay near Absalom, when he should enter the city, and if possible defeat the counsel of Ahithophel. So Hushai, David's friend, went back to the city and abode near Absalom.

David and his followers proceeded meanwhile on their sorrowful way, and when they were a little past the top of the ascent, behold Ziba, the servant of Mephibosheth, met them, with a couple of asses saddled, and upon them two hundred loaves of bread and an hundred clusters of raisins, and an hundred of summer fruits, and a skin of wine. And the king said unto Ziba:

"What meanest thou by these?"

And Ziba said:

"The asses be for the king's household to ride on; and

the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat; and the wine, that such as be faint in the wilderness may drink."

And the king said:

"And where is thy master's son?"

And Ziba answered scornfully:

"Behold, he abideth at Jerusalem: for he said, 'To-day shall the house of Israel restore me the kingdom of my father.' "

Then said the king to Ziba:

"Behold, thine is all that pertaineth to Mephibosheth."

And Ziba answered:

"I do obeisance; let me find favor in thy sight, my lord, O king!"

When David arrived as far as Bahurim, behold, there came out thence a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera; he came out and cursed still as he came. And he cast stones at David and at all the servants of King David, and cried out:

"Begone, begone, thou man of blood and man of Belial: the Lord hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul in whose stead thou hast reigned: and the Lord hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son: and behold thou art taken in thine own mischief, because thou art a man of blood."

Then said Abishai, the son of Zeruiah, unto the king:

"Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head."

But David answered:

"Behold, my own son seeketh my life: how much more may this Benjamite now do it? Let him alone and let him curse. It may be that the Lord will look on the wrong done unto me and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing of me this day."

So David and his men went along by the way; and Shimei went along on the hill-side over against him and cursed as he went, and threw stones at him and cast dust. And the king and all that were with him came weary to Ayephim, and refreshed themselves there.

When Absalom entered Jerusalem he found Hushai the Archite waiting there to offer him his services as counsellor, and though he was at first somewhat surprised at his father's faithful servant being willing to leave him, he ended by gladly accepting Hushai's offer and enrolling him as counsellor by the side of Ahithophel. Now, men thought so highly of Ahithophel that when he counselled in those days, it was as though a man enquired of the oracles of God, and Hushai was his sole rival.

Soon after they were come into Jerusalem, Ahithophel said to Absalom:

"Let me now choose out twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue after David this night: and I will come upon him while he is weary and weakhanded, and will make him afraid: and all the people that are with him shall flee; and I will smite the king only: and I will bring back all the people unto thee: so all the people shall be in peace."

And the saying pleased Absalom well, and all the elders that were with him. But before he gave his consent to the plan Absalom said:

"Call now Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear likewise what he saith."

And when Hushai was come, Absalom spake unto him, saying:

"Ahithophel hath spoken after this manner: shall we do his saying? If not, speak thou."

Then said Hushai:

"The counsel that Ahithophel hath given this time is not

good. Thou knowest thy father and his men," he continued, "that they be mighty men, and that they are chafed in their minds, as a bear robbed of her whelps in the field: and thy father is a man of war and will not lodge with the people. Behold, now he is hid in some pit, or in some other place: and it will come to pass that when he falleth upon them that come first, that whosoever heareth it will say, 'There is a slaughter among the people that follow Absalom.' And even he that is valiant, whose heart is as the heart of a lion, shall utterly melt: for all Israel knoweth that thy father is a mighty man, and they which be with him are valiant men. But I counsel that all Israel be gathered together unto thee from Dan even to Beersheba, as the sand that is by the sea for multitude; and that thou go to battle in thine own person. So shall we come upon him in some place where he shall be found, and we will light upon him as the dew falleth upon the ground: and of him and of all the men that are with him we will not leave so much as one. Moreover, if he withdraw himself into a city, then shall all Israel bring ropes to that city, and we will draw it into the river, until there be not one small stone found there."

And Absalom and all his men said:

"The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel."

Then sent Hushai secretly unto David's friends, to Zadok and Abiathar, the priests, and told them all that had passed, and how his counsel had been accepted over that of Ahithophel, and said to them:

"Now therefore send quickly and tell David, saying, 'Lodge not this night in the plain of the wilderness, but in any wise pass over; lest the king be swallowed up and all the people that are with him.'"

Now Jonathan and Ahimaaz, Zadok's sons, stayed just

outside Jerusalem, at a little village called En-rogel, and a maid-servant used to carry out messages to them, that they might not be seen to enter the city. But a lad saw and recognized them and told Absalom who they were, and they were obliged to fly quickly and hide themselves at Bahurim, in the house of a man who had a well in his court. When they had gone down thither the woman of the house took and spread a covering over the well's mouth, and strewed bruised corn thereon; and nothing was known. Then came Absalom's servants to the house, and they said:

"Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan?"

And the woman said unto them:

"They be gone over the brook of water."

And when they sought and could not find them they returned to Jerusalem. And no sooner had they gone than the two men came up out of the well and departed, and made their way without further hindrance to King David, to whom they safely delivered Hushai's message. Then David arose, and all the people that were with him, and passed over Jordan; by the morning light there lacked not one of them that was not gone over Jordan.

Meanwhile in Jerusalem Absalom had lost one of his advisers, for when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed he saddled his ass, and arose and gat him home unto his city, and set his house in order and hanged himself; and he died and was buried in the sepulchre of his father.

Absalom at once set out in pursuit of his father David, and crossed over Jordan into the land of Gilead. David was in a city of that country, called Mahanaim, and was at last reluctantly preparing to go to war against his son. He evidently found himself among friends, for we are told that Shobi, an Ammonite, and Machir of Lo-debar, and

Barzillai, a Gileadite, brought beds and basins, and earthen vessels, and wheat and barley and meal and parched corn and beans and lentils and parched pulse and honey and butter and sheep and cheese of kine, for David and the people that were with him to eat; for they said:

"The people is hungry and weary and thirsty in the wilderness."

Absalom had put a general called Amasa at the head of his troops. David divided his into three companies, commanded, one by Joab, one by Abishai, and one by Ittai, the Gittite. He wished to lead his forces himself, but his people dissuaded him, for when he said:

"I will surely go with you myself also;" they answered:

"Thou shalt not go forth: for if we flee away, they will not care for us; neither if half of us die will they care for us: but thou art worthy ten thousand of us: therefore now it is better that thou be ready to succor us out of the city."

And David gave in to them, saying:

"What seemeth you best I will do."

So he stood sadly by the gate-side and watched his people go out to fight by hundreds and by thousands, for many had flocked to his standard. And one command the king laid on his three generals. He said to Joab and Abishai and Ittai:

"Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom."

And all the people heard when he gave the captains charge concerning Absalom.

So the people went out into the field; and the battle was in the forest of Ephraim. And the people of Israel were smitten there before the servants of David, and there was a great slaughter that day of twenty thousand men. For the battle was there spread over the face of all the country;

and many lost their way, so that the forest devoured more people than the sword.

And Absalom chanced to meet the servants of David. And Absalom rode upon his mule, and the mule went under the thick boughs of a great oak, and his head caught hold of the oak, and he was taken up between the heaven and the earth; and the mule that was under him went on. And a certain man saw him hanging thus by his hair, and hurried to Joab, saying:

"Behold, I saw Absalom hanging in an oak."

And Joab said unto the man:

"And behold, thou sawest it, and why didst thou not smite him to the ground? And I would have given thee ten pieces of silver and a girdle;" for Absalom was not Joab's son, and he had small pity for him. But the man said:

"Though I should receive a thousand pieces of silver in my hands, yet would I not put forth my hand against the king's son: for in our hearing the king charged thee and Abishai and Ittai, saying, 'Beware that none touch the young man Absalom'."

Then said the old captain impatiently:

"I may not tarry thus with thee."

And he himself went back and took up three darts in his hand and thrust them through the heart of Absalom, while he was yet alive in the midst of the oak, and the ten young men that bare Joab's armor compassed about and smote Absalom and slew him. So Absalom's beauty wrought his ruin.

Then Joab blew the trumpet and his men returned from pursuing after Israel, for Joab spared the enemy who, after all, were his own brethren; and they took Absalom and cast him into the great pit in the forest, and raised over him a very great heap of stones; and all his followers fled away, every one to his tent.

Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and reared up for himself a pillar, which is in the king's dale, for he said, "I have no son to keep my name in remembrance," and he called the pillar after his own name; and it is called Absalom's Monument unto this day.

After Absalom had been safely buried, Ahimaaz, the son of Zadok, said to Joab:

"Let me now run and bear the king tidings, how that the Lord hath avenged him of his enemies."

But Joab knew that what they had to tell would be ill news for Absalom's father to hear, and he said to Ahimaaz:

"Thou shalt not be the bearer of tidings this day, because the king's son is dead;" and he picked out an insignificant man, a Cushite, and commanded him:

"Go and tell the king what thou hast seen."

And the Cushite bowed himself unto Joab and ran.

Then said Ahimaaz yet again to Joab:

"But come what may, let me, I pray thee, also run after the Cushite."

And Joab asked him:

"Wherefore wilt thou run, my son, seeing that thou wilt have no reward for the tidings?"

"But come what may," said he, "I will run."

Then said Joab unto him:

"Run."

And Ahimaaz ran by the way of the plains, and did outrun the Cushite.

Now David sat between the two gates of the city Mahanaim, and the watchman went up to the roof of the gate unto the wall, and lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold a man running alone. And the watchman cried and told the king. And the king said:

"If he be alone there is tidings in his mouth."

And he came apace and drew near.

DAVID MOURNING FOR ABSALOM

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And the watchman saw another man running; and he called out unto the porter, and said:

"Behold another man running alone."

And the king said:

"He also bringeth tidings."

And the watchman said:

"Methinketh the running of the foremost is like the running of Ahimaaz, the son of Zadok."

And the king said:

"He is a good man, and cometh with good tidings."

And Ahimaaz called and said unto the king:

"All is well."

And he bowed himself before the king with his face to the earth, and said:

"Blessed be the Lord thy God, which hath delivered up the men that lifted up their hand against my lord the king."

But the king asked:

"Is it well with the young man Absalom?"

And Ahimaaz was afraid to tell the truth, and answered evasively:

"When Joab sent the king's servant and thy servant, I saw a great tumult, but I know not what it was."

Then said the king:

"Turn aside and stand here."

And he turned aside and stood still.

And behold, the Cushite came, and the Cushite said:

"Tidings for my lord the king: for the Lord hath avenged thee this day of all them that rose up against thee."

Then said the king once more:

"Is it well with the young man Absalom?"

And the Cushite answered:

"The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise up against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is."

Then the king knew that his son was dead, and he went up to the chamber above the gate and wept, and as he went thus he said:

"O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

CHAPTER XXIV

THE LAST DAYS OF KING DAVID

Now, word was soon brought to Joab that the king wept and mourned for Absalom, and the victory that day was turned into mourning unto all the people; for the people heard that day: "The king grieveth for his son."

And they gat them by stealth that day into the city, as people that are ashamed steal away when they flee in battle. And the king covered his face, and cried with a loud voice:

"O my Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

Then came Joab into the house of the king, and said to him sternly:

"Thou hast shamed this day the face of all thy servants, which this day have saved thy life and the lives of thy sons and thy daughters and thy wives; in that thou lovest them that hate thee, and hatest them that love thee. For thou hast declared this day that princes and servants are naught unto thee, for this day I perceive, that if Absalom had lived, and all we had died this day, that it had pleased thee well.

"Now, therefore," he continued, "go forth and speak comfortably unto thy servants: for I swear by the Lord, if thou go not forth, there will not tarry a man with thee this night; and that will be worse unto thee than all the evil which hath befallen thee from thy youth until now."

This at last brought David to himself, and he arose and sat in the gate, and they told unto all the people, saying:

"Behold, the king doth sit in the gate;" and all the

people came before him. But I think David in his heart never forgave Joab for that day's work.

Absalom's army, in the meantime, had dispersed in confusion, and the men of all the tribes throughout Israel met together, saying to one another:

"The king delivered us out of the hand of our enemies, and he saved us out of the hand of the Philistines; and now he is fled out of the land from Absalom. And Absalom, whom we anointed over us, is dead in battle. Now, therefore, why speak ye not a word of bringing the king back?"

And they ended by sending a message to David:

"Return thou and all thy servants."

David had the wisdom to show no anger and take no revenge on his repentant subjects. He only answered their invitation with the one reproach:

"Ye are my brethren, ye are my bone and flesh: wherefore then are ye the last to bring back the king?"

Then he ordered his men to prepare for the homeward march. And when he was come as far as the river Jordan, all Judah came to Gilgal to meet their king and bring him over Jordan, and with them came Shimei, the son of Gera, the man who had so insulted David when he was flying from Jerusalem. There were also a thousand men of Benjamin assembled there, and Ziba, the servant of the house of Saul, and his fifteen sons and twenty servants with him; and they went through Jordan in the presence of the king. And there went over a ferry-boat to bring over the king's household, and to do what he thought good.

When David had safely crossed the river, and was standing on the farther bank, Shimei, the son of Gera, came forth from among the crowd, and fell down before the king, and said humbly:

"Let not my lord impute iniquity unto me, neither do

thou remember that which thy servant did perversely the day that my lord the king went out of Jerusalem, that the king should take it to his heart. For thy servant doth know that I have sinned: therefore, behold, I am come this day the first of all the house of Joseph to go down and meet my lord the king."

Before David could answer, Abishai, the son of Zeruiah, interposed, saying angrily:

"Shall not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the Lord's anointed?"

But David chided this over-zealous servant.

"What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah," he said, "that ye should this day be adversaries unto me? Shall there any man be put to death this day in Israel? For do not I know that I am this day king over Israel?"

And he said unto Shimei:

"Thou shalt not die;" and swore to keep his words.

After this, Mephibosheth, the son of Saul, came down to meet the king; and he had neither dressed his feet nor trimmed his beard nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came home in peace. And David said unto him:

"Wherefore wentest thou not with us, Mephibosheth?"

And he answered:

"My lord, O king, my servant deceived me; for thy servant said, 'I will saddle an ass that I may ride thereon and go with the king'; because thy servant is lame. And Ziba hath slandered thy servant unto my lord the king, but my lord the king is as an angel of God: do therefore what is good in thine eyes. For all my father's house were but dead men before my lord the king; yet didst thou set thy servant among them that did eat at thine own table. What right, therefore, have I yet that I should cry any more unto the king?"

David did not altogether believe the story of Mephibosheth, and his excessive humility displeased him, and he answered sharply:

"Why speakest thou any more of thy matters? I say, thou and Ziba divide the land."

And Mephibosheth, glad to escape so easily, said:

"Yea, let him take all, forasmuch as my lord the king is come in peace unto his own house."

The next to approach the king must have been doubly welcome to him after these half-hearted friends, for Barzillai the Gileadite was a true man and had been one of those to provide the king with sustenance while he lay at Mahanaim. He had been appointed one of a number to conduct David over the Jordan, for he was a very great man, and an aged one, even fourscore years old.

King David was loath to part with him.

"Come thou over with me," he said, "and I will sustain thee with me in Jerusalem."

But the old man answered:

"How many are the days of the years of my life, that I should go up with the king unto Jerusalem? I am this day fourscore years old: can I discern between good and bad? Can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink? Can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women? Wherefore then should thy servant be yet a burden unto my lord the king? Thy servant would but just go over Jordan with the king; and why should the king recompense it me with such a reward? Let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back again that I may die in mine own city, by the grave of my father and my mother."

Then Barzillai brought forward his son, saying:

"But behold thy servant Chimham; let him go over with my lord the king; and do to him what shall seem good to thee."

And the king answered:

"Chimham shall go over with me, and I will do to him that which shall seem good unto thee: and whatsoever thou shalt choose to lay upon me, that will I do for thee."

And the king kissed Barzillai and blessed him, and he returned unto his own place.

Now, though the rebellious tribes of Israel had sent for David to come back and reign over them, the feeling was still very bitter between them and the loyal adherents of the king, and they were jealous of the men of Judah. The smouldering resentment and suspicion in their hearts might, however, have died out of itself if there had not been near a man of Belial, to stir it into a blaze. This was Sheba, the son of Bichri, a Benjamite. He blew the trumpet, and when the people began to assemble at the call, he said to them:

"We have no portion in David, neither have we any inheritance in the son of Jesse: every man to his tent, O Israel."

And at his words the fickle people of Israel abandoned David once more, and followed Sheba, the son of Bichri; but the men of Judah clave unto their king, from Judah even to Jerusalem. David marched straight on to Jerusalem with his immediate followers, and the first person they met within the city was Amasa, Absalom's general. He was fervent in his protestations of friendship for the king, and David sent him out immediately to call all the men of Judah together for an expedition against Sheba. But the day appointed for Amasa's return came, and he arrived not; neither did the men of Judah assemble. Then David called Abishai unto him, and said:

"Now shall Sheba, the son of Bichri, do us more harm than did Absalom: take thou thy lord's servants and

pursue after him, lest he get him fenced cities and escape out of our sight."

And there went out after Abishai Joab's men and the Cherethites and the Pelethites and all the mighty men, to pursue after Sheba, the son of Bichri. When they were come as far as the great stone which is in Gibeon, Amasa came out to meet them, and when Joab, that grim old soldier, saw him approaching he took his sword in his hand, and as Amasa came up with them, he stepped forward, saying:

"Is it well with thee, my brother?" and took him by the beard with his right hand to kiss him; then suddenly, before Amasa even noticed his sword, he ran him through with it, striking him only once, and he died. Joab and Abishai only waited to see that Amasa was dead before they hastened on their way, leaving one of Joab's young men near the body:

"He that favoreth Joab and he that is for David, let him follow Joab."

But as the people gathered at the cry, they one and all stopped where Amasa lay wallowing in his blood in the midst of the highway; and when the young man saw that they stood still, he carried Amasa out of the highway into the field, and cast a garment over him. Then, when he was removed out of the highway, all the people went on after Joab.

They pursued Sheba for many days, but at last they found him in a city called Abel of Beth-maachah, and immediately proceeded to besiege the city. They cast up a mount against the city, and it stood against the rampart; and all the people under the leadership of Joab battered the wall to throw it down. Then cried a wise woman out of the city:

"Hear, hear: say, I pray thee, unto Joab, 'Come near hither, that I may speak with thee.'"

And Joab came near unto her. And the woman said:

"Art thou Joab?"

And he answered:

"I am."

Then she said to him:

"Hear the words of thy handmaid."

And he answered:

"I hear."

Then she spake, saying:

"I am of them that are peaceable and faithful in Israel: thou seekest to destroy a city and a mother in Israel: why wilt thou swallow up the inheritance of the Lord?"

And Joab, fresh from the killing of Amasa, answered:

"Far be it, far be it from me, that I should swallow up or destroy. The matter is not so: but a man from the hill country of Ephraim, Sheba the son of Bichri by name, hath lifted up his hand against the king, even against David: deliver him only, and I will depart from the city."

And the woman said to Joab:

"Behold, his head shall be thrown to thee over the wall."

And she went back into the city, in her wisdom, and advised the people of the only means by which they might save themselves and their homes. And they cut off the head of the unfortunate Sheba, son of Bichri, and threw it out to Joab, and immediately Joab blew his trumpet and his men were dispersed from the city, and returned to Jerusalem unto the king.

After this for many years there was peace between the tribes of Israel, and the king could turn his attention to other matters. There was a famine in the land for three years, and following the famine came a revival of the old wars with the Philistines, who were led by the brother of Goliath, the giant whom David had slain in his youth.

David tried to command these wars himself, but once he waxed faint in the battle-field, and would have been killed by a Philistine if Abishai had not run up and succored him; and after that the men of David swore:

"Thou shall go no more out with us to battle, that thou quench not the lamp of Israel."

Another story is told of David in these wars,—how at one time when they were besieging the Philistines, who had shut themselves up in the city of Bethlehem, there was no water to be had, and David longed for a draught to quench his thirst, and cried:

"Oh that one would give me water to drink of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate."

He meant nothing by the words, but three of his mighty men heard him, and for love of him they broke through the host of the Philistines and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took it and brought it safely to David. But when they told him what they had done, he was angry at the thought of three brave men risking their lives for such a trifle, and he would not drink of the water, but poured it out upon the ground, saying:

"Be it far from me, O Lord, that I should do this: should I drink the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives?"

A tale much less to David's credit is how he delivered up the seven descendants of Saul to their mortal enemies, the Gibeonites, who hanged every one of them on a tree; but it is too long to tell here. It is enough for you to remember that of all Saul's children and grandchildren, only Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, was left alive. Perhaps it was from remorse for his share in this massacre that David had the bones of Saul and Jonathan taken from their foreign resting-place in Jabesh-Gilead and solemnly

brought home and buried in the country of Benjamin in Zela, in the sepulchre of Kish, Saul's father.

Later on we are told of a pestilence in all the land, and of how David reared an altar in the threshing-floor of Araunah, the Jebusite, when it ceased, in commemoration of the mercy of the Lord.

This brings us to the last notable event of David's life. He was grown an old man now, and stricken in years, and took little interest in what went on about him. He was dependent for what comfort he had on a servant of his, a young maiden called Abishag the Shunamite, who was very fair of countenance and gentle of manner, and ministered to the wants of the king.

Now one of the king's sons, Adonijah, seeing his father so very feeble, and apparently so indifferent to all about him, said to himself, "I will be king"; and, like Absalom, he prepared him chariots and horsemen and fifty men to run before him. He was a very goodly man, fewer in years than Absalom, and had always lived on the best of terms with his father. Now he conferred with old Joab and with Abiathar the priest, and won them over to his cause; and on a certain day he gave a great feast and invited all his friends to it. He slew sheep and oxen and fatlings by the stone of Zoheleth, which is beside En-rogel, for them to eat, but Nathan the prophet and the mighty men and Solomon his brother he called not, for he knew that they would be opposed to him. And indeed Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the son of Jehoida, and Nathan and Shimei and Rei, and the mighty men which belonged to David were not with Adonijah. And as soon as the news of his feast reached the ears of Nathan, he hurried to the palace to consult with Queen Bathsheba, for there had been an understanding for many years that her son Solomon was to inherit the crown.

"Hast thou heard," he said to her, "that Adonijah doth reign, and David our lord knoweth it not?"

And then, as she answered nothing in her surprise and dismay, he continued:

"Now, therefore, come, let me, I pray thee, give thee counsel, that thou mayest save thine own life and the life of thy son Solomon. Go and get thee in unto King David and say unto him, 'Didst not thou, my lord, O king, swear unto thine handmaid, saying, Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne? Why then doth Adonijah reign?' Behold, while thou yet talkest there with the king I also will come in after thee and confirm thy words."

And Bathsheba obeyed Nathan implicitly, and went immediately in unto the king, whom she found alone, save for Abishag the Shunamite. And Bathsheba bowed and did obeisance unto the king, and he asked:

"What wouldest thou?"

And she said unto him:

"My lord, thou swearest by the Lord thy God unto thine handmaid, saying, 'Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne.' And now, behold, Adonijah reigneth, and thou, my lord the king, knowest it not: and he hath slain oxen and fatlings and sheep in abundance, and hath called all the sons of the king and Abiathar the priest, and Joab the captain of the host; but Solomon, thy servant, hath he not called. And now, my lord the king, the eyes of all Israel are upon thee, that thou shouldest tell them who shall sit upon the throne of my lord the king after him. Otherwise it shall come to pass, when my lord the king shall sleep with his fathers, that I and my son Solomon shall be counted offenders."

And lo, while she yet talked with the king, Nathan the prophet came in. And they told the king, saying:

"Behold Nathan the prophet."

And when he was come in, he bowed himself before the king with his face to the ground, and said:

"My lord, O king, hast thou said, 'Adonijah shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne'? For he is gone down this day and hath slain oxen and fatlings and sheep in abundance, and hath called all the king's sons and the captains of the host and Abiathar the priest; and behold, they eat and drink before him, and say, 'God save King Adonijah!' But me, even thy servant, and Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the son of Jehoida, and thy servant Solomon hath he not called. Is this thing done by my lord the king, and thou hast not showed unto thy servants who should sit on the throne of my lord the king after him?"

Then King David answered and said:

"Call me Bathsheba."

And Bathsheba, who had left the king's presence when Nathan entered, returned and stood before him. And the king sware, and said:

"As the Lord liveth, who hath redeemed my soul out of all adversity, verily as I sware unto thee by the Lord, the God of Israel, saying: 'Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne in my stead'; verily so will I do this day."

Then Bathsheba bowed with her face to the earth, and did obeisance to the king, and said:

"Let my lord King David live forever."

And King David said:

"Call me Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoida."

And they came before the king. And he said to them:

"Take with you the servants of your lord, and cause Solomon, my son, to ride upon mine own mule, and bring

him down to Gihon: and let Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet anoint him there king over Israel; and blow ye with the trumpet, and say, 'God save King Solomon.' Then shall ye come up after him, and he shall come and sit upon my throne; for he shall be king in my stead; and I have appointed him to be leader over Israel and over Judah."

And Benaiah the son of Jehoida answered the king, and said:

"Amen: the Lord, the God of my lord the king, say so too. As the Lord hath been with my lord the king, even so be he with Solomon, and make his throne greater than the throne of my lord King David."

So Zadok and Nathan and Benaiah and the Cherethites and the Pelethites went down and caused Solomon to ride upon King David's mule, and brought him to Gihon. And Zadok the priest took a horn of oil out of the tent and anointed Solomon. And they blew the trumpet, and all the people said: "God save King Solomon." And they came up after him, and all the people piped with pipes and rejoiced with great joy, so that the earth rent with the sound of them. And Adonijah and all the guests that were with him heard it as they had made an end of eating. And when Joab heard the sound of the trumpet, he said:

"Wherefore is this noise of the city being in an uproar?"

While he yet spake, behold, Jonathan, the son of Abiathar the priest, came; and Adonijah said:

"Come in, for thou art a worthy man, and bringest good tidings."

And Jonathan answered and said unto Adonijah:

"Verily, our lord King David hath made Solomon king; and the king hath sent with him Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet and Benaiah the son of Jehoida,

and the Cherethites and the Pelethites, and they have caused him to ride upon the king's mule: and Zadok and Nathan have anointed him king in Gihon; and they are come up from thence rejoicing, so that the city rang again. This is the noise that ye have heard. And also Solomon sitteth upon the throne of the kingdom. And moreover the king's servants came to bless our lord King David, saying: 'God make the name of Solomon better than thy name, and make his throne greater than thy throne:' and the king bowed himself upon his bed, and said, 'Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel, which hath given one to sit on my throne this day, mine eyes even seeing it'."

And as Jonathan ceased speaking, and his hearers realized that not only was Solomon firmly seated on the throne, but that their old ruler, with a last effort of his strong will, had established him thereon, they were all afraid, and rose up and went every man his way.

As for Adonijah, he feared because of Solomon; and he went and caught hold on the horns of the altar, which was the same thing as seeking refuge in a sanctuary, like poor Thomas à Becket in England many centuries later; but when it was told Solomon where Adonijah was hidden, and how he said, "Let King Solomon swear unto me this day that he will not slay his servant with the sword"; the new king said: "If he shall shew himself a worthy man, there shall not an hair of his head fall to the earth; but if wickedness be found in him, he shall die."

So King Solomon sent, and they brought Adonijah down from the altar, and he came and did obeisance; and Solomon said unto him:

"Go to thine house."

Now the days of David drew nigh that he should die; and he called his son Solomon to him to receive his last instructions. He commended to his kindness forever the

sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and bade Solomon let them eat at his table, even as his own sons; but the hatred of a lifetime burst out in the warning he gave him to in no wise trust old Joab, the grim man of blood. He also cautioned Solomon against Shimei, the son of Gera, and he ended with a special admonition to his son.

"I go the way of all the earth," said King David, "be thou strong therefore and shew thyself a man; and keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes and his commandments and his judgments and his testimonies, according to that which is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest do wisely in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself; that the Lord may establish his word which he spake concerning me, saying: 'If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth, with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail thee a man on the throne of Israel'."

Now these be the last words of David:

"David the son of Jesse saith:
And the man who was raised on high saith,
The anointed of the God of Jacob,
And the sweet psalmist of Israel:
The spirit of the Lord spake by me,
And his word was upon my tongue.
The god of Israel said,
The rock of Israel spake to me:
One that ruleth over men righteously,
That ruleth in the fear of God,
He shall be the light of the morning, when the sun riseth,
A morning without clouds;
When the tender grass springeth out of the earth,
Through clear shining after rain."

And David slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of David, having reigned over Israel for forty years; seven years reigned he in Hebron, and thirty-and-three years reigned he in Jerusalem.

Perhaps we cannot do better than close our story of King David with the words of another of his own beautiful psalms or hymns, one that he composed in the joy of his heart after a great victory over his lifelong foes, the Philistines.

"The Lord is my rock," he sang, "and my fortress and my deliverer, even mine:
The God of my rock, in him will I trust:
My shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower and my refuge:
My Savior, thou savest me from violence.
The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness:
According to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me.
With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful,
With the perfect man thou wilt show thyself perfect,
The word of the Lord is tried;
He is a shield to all them that trust in him.
For who is God, save the Lord?
And who is a rock, save our God?
God is my strong fortress:
And he setteth free the perfect in his way.
Great deliverance giveth he to his king:
And sheweth loving kindness to his anointed,
To David and his seed for evermore."

CHAPTER XXV

THE TEMPLE

The first decrees of King Solomon were distinguished for their severity, not to say cruelty, and were issued against Adonijah, against Joab and against Shimei the son of Gera. Adonijah was put to death in the following fashion: He fell in love with his father's servant, Abishag the Shunamite, and he went to Queen Bathsheba, who was supposed to have great influence with her son the king, to ask her to help him in his suit. Bathsheba met him kindly.

"Comest thou peaceably?" she said.

And Adonijah answered:

"Peaceably. I have somewhat to say to thee."

Then said she:

"Say on."

Then Adonijah told his story.

"Thou knowest that the kingdom was mine," said he, "and that all Israel set their faces on me, that I should reign: howbeit the kingdom is turned about, and is become my brother's: for it was his from the Lord. And now I ask one petition of thee: deny me not."

"Say on," said Bathsheba.

And he continued:

"Speak, I pray thee, unto Solomon the king (for he will not say thee nay), that he give me Abishag the Shunamite to wife."

And Bathsheba answered:

"Well; I will speak for thee unto the king."

Bathsheba went therefore unto King Solomon, to speak unto him for Adonijah. And when she came in, the king rose up to meet her, and bowed himself unto her, and sat down on his throne, and caused a throne to be set for the king's mother; and she sat on his right hand. For Solomon always had great respect for her. Then Bathsheba said:

"I ask one small petition of thee: deny me not."

And the king answered her:

"Ask on, my mother, for I will not deny thee."

And she said:

"Let Abishag the Shunamite be given to Adonijah thy brother to wife."

But King Solomon answered his mother impatiently:

"And why dost thou ask Abishag the Shunamite for Adonijah?" and he went on sarcastically: "Ask for him the kingdom also; for he is mine elder brother; even for him and for Abiathar the priest and for Joab the son of Zeruiah."

And he grew more and more angry, and sware by the Lord, saying:

"God do so to me and more also, if Adonijah hath not spoken this word against his own life. Now therefore as the Lord liveth, who hath established me and set me on the throne of David my father, surely Adonijah shall be put to death this day."

Perhaps Solomon was jealous of Adonijah and half afraid of his popularity, and seized the first pretext he could find to put him to death. We can only guess at his motives, but we know positively that he sent Benaiah the son of Jehoida with orders to kill his brother, and that poor Adonijah died that day.

Then the king sent for Adonijah's friend, the priest Abiathar, and said to him:

"Get thee to Anathoth, unto thine old fields: for thou art worthy of death: but I will not at this time put thee to death, because thou barest the Ark of the Lord God before David my father, and because thou wast afflicted in all wherein my father was afflicted."

So Abiathar was disposed of, and Solomon could turn his attention to another man whom he suspected of being his enemy. This was Joab, for the old man had turned after Adonijah, though he turned not after Absalom. But Joab had heard what had befallen Adonijah and Abiathar, and he fled unto the Tent of the Lord, for refuge, and caught hold on the horns of the altar. And it was told the king that he was there. And Solomon, with small respect for the right of sanctuary, bade his servant Benaiah go and fall upon Joab as he had fallen upon Adonijah. Then went Benaiah to the Tent of the Lord, and called to Joab:

"Come forth."

But he answered:

"Nay, but I will die here."

And Benaiah went back to the king, saying:

"Thus saith Joab and thus he answered me."

Then said Solomon:

"Do as I have said, and fall upon him, and bury him. And the Lord shall return his blood upon his own head, because he fell upon two men more righteous and better than he, and slew them with the sword, and my father David knew it not, to wit, Abner the son of Ner and Amasa the son of Jether."

Then Benaiah went up as he was commanded, and fell upon Joab and slew him; and he was buried in his own house in the wilderness. And the king put Benaiah in his place as captain of the host, and made Zadok priest in the room of Abiathar.

And now Solomon sent for Shimei the son of Gera, and said to him:

"Build thee an house in Jerusalem, and go not forth thence any whither. For on the day thou goest forth and passest over the brook Kidron, know thou for certain that thou shalt surely die: thy blood shall be upon thine own head."

For Solomon wished to keep Shimei under his own immediate supervision.

And Shimei answered:

"The saying is good: as my lord the king hath said, so will thy servant do."

And he dwelt in Jerusalem many days. But at the end of two years, it happened that two of his servants ran away unto Achish, king of Gath, and when Shimei heard of it, he rose and saddled his ass and went in pursuit of them, and brought them back to Jerusalem with him. And it was told Solomon that Shimei had gone from Jerusalem to Gath and was come again, and the king's suspicions were aroused. He sent for Shimei and said to him:

"Did not I make thee swear by the Lord, and protested unto thee, saying, 'Know for certain that on the day thou goest out and walkest abroad any whither, thou shalt surely die'? and thou saidst unto me, 'The saying that I have heard is good.' Why then hast thou not kept the oath of the Lord and the commandment that I have charged thee with?"

And as Shimei had nothing to answer, the king proceeded sternly:

"Thou knowest all the wickedness which thine heart is privy to, that thou didst to David my father: therefore, the Lord shall return thy wickedness upon thine own head."

And he gave orders to Benaiah to fall upon Shimei and kill him.

So was Solomon rid of his enemies, and the kingdom was established in his hand; and he had time to carry out the important obligation that his father David had laid upon him of building a Temple for the Ark of the Lord. David had intended to do this himself, and had gone so far as to gather together the strangers that were in the land of Israel, to make of them workmen, and had set masons to the task of hewing wrought stones for the house of God, and had accumulated iron in abundance for the nails of the doors of the gates, and for the couplings, and brass in abundance without weight; and cedar trees without number from Zidon and Tyre; but just as he had his materials ready other affairs in his kingdom had claimed his attention, and he had decided to leave to his son the carrying out of his plan. "Solomon, my son, is young and tender," he said to himself, "and the house that is to be builded for the Lord must be exceeding magnificent, of fame and of glory throughout all countries: I will therefore make preparation for it." So David prepared abundantly before his death. Then he called for Solomon his son, and charged him to build an house for the Lord, the God of Israel. And David said to Solomon:

"My son, as for me, it was in my heart to build an house unto the name of the Lord my God. But the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 'Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build an house unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in my sight: behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest: and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: for his name shall be Solomon (that is, peaceful), and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days; he shall build an house for my name.' Now, my son, the Lord be with thee; and prosper thou and build the house of the

Lord thy God, as he hath spoken concerning thee. Be strong and of good courage; fear not, neither be dismayed. Now, behold, in my low estate, I have prepared for the house of the Lord an hundred thousand talents of gold, and a thousand thousand talents of silver; and of brass and iron without weight, for it is in abundance: timber also and stone have I prepared; and thou mayest add thereto. Moreover, there are workmen with thee in abundance, hewers and workers of stone and timber, and all men that are cunning in any manner of work; of the gold, and the silver, and the brass and the iron there is no number; arise and be doing, and the Lord be with thee."

And again David said:

"Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy fathers and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the Lord searcheth all hearts and understandeth all the imagination of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off forever. Take heed now, for the Lord hath chosen thee to build an house for the sanctuary: be strong and do it."

Then David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch of the Temple, and of the houses thereof, and of the treasuries thereof, and of the upper rooms and inner chambers: and Solomon and all the princes of Israel promised solemnly to carry out the wishes of David, wherefore David blessed them and rejoiced.

Now, Solomon did not forget these words of his father, and after the death of Joab, he commenced his preparations for the Temple, but on a more magnificent scale than even his father had dreamed of. He sent to King Hiram of Tyre, who had been a lover of David, saying to him:

"Thou knowest how that David my father could not build an house for the name of the Lord his God, for the

wars which were about him on every side, until the Lord put them under the soles of his feet. But now the Lord my God hath given me rest on every side; there is neither adversary nor evil occurrent. And behold, I purpose to build an house for the name of the Lord my God. . . . Now, therefore, command thou that they hew me cedar trees out of Lebanon; and my servants shall be with thy servants; and I will give thee hires for thy servants according to all that thou shalt say: for thou knowest that there is not among us any that can skill to hew timber like unto the Zidonians." (You remember that the inhabitants of Tyre and Zidon were both Phœnicians.)

And it came to pass when Hiram heard the words of Solomon that he rejoiced greatly, and said:

"Blessed be the Lord this day, which hath given unto David a wise son over this great people."

And he sent to Solomon, saying:

"I have heard the message which thou hast sent unto me: I will do all thy desire concerning timber of cedar and concerning timber of cypress. My servants shall bring them down from Lebanon unto the sea (the Mediterranean): and I will make them into rafts to go by sea unto the place that thou shalt appoint me, and will cause them to be broken up there, and thou shalt carry them away, and thou shalt accomplish thy desire in giving food for my household."

So Hiram gave Solomon timber of cedar and timber of cypress according to his desire; and Solomon gave Hiram twenty thousand measures of wheat for food to his household, and twenty measures of pure oil; these gave Solomon to Hiram year by year; and there was peace between Hiram and Solomon; and they two made a league together.

Now, Mount Lebanon, where the tallest and finest cedars

grew, was far to the north of Jerusalem, and the easiest way to obtain the wood was to float it by the sea to the seaport of Joppa (or Jaffa), and haul it thence the short distance to the city. The men of Tyre and the Zidonians, who were born sailors, would, thanks to King Hiram, attend to the transportation of the wood; but many men were needed to chop it down and convey it to the coast; so King Solomon raised a levy out of all Israel; and the levy was thirty thousand men. And he sent them to Lebanon, ten thousand a month by turns; a month they were at Lebanon, and two months at home; and he appointed a man called Adoniram in command of the men. Besides these Solomon appointed seventy thousand men to bear burdens, and eighty thousand men to go to the mountains and hew stones; and there were three thousand three hundred officers in charge of them. And they hewed out great stones, costly stones, besides those that David had accumulated, to lay the foundation of the Temple with wrought stone; and Solomon's builders and Hiram's builders and the Gebalites did shape them and prepare the timbers and stones ready to build.

Then Solomon sent again to Hiram, saying:

"Send me a man cunning to work in gold and in silver, in brass and in iron, and in purple and crimson and blue, and that can skill to grave gravings, to be over the cunning men that are with me in Judah and Jerusalem, whom David my father did provide."

And Hiram answered:

"I have sent a cunning man, endued with understanding, the son of a woman of the daughters of Dan, and his father was a man of Tyre, skilful to work in gold and in silver, in brass, in iron, in stone and in timber, in purple and blue, and in fine linen and in crimson; also to grave any manner of graving, and to devise any device."

This man was called Hiram, after the king of Tyre himself.

And in the fourth year of his reign Solomon began to build the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, in the place that David had appointed, in the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

The Temple, as we call it, was about a hundred feet long and thirty-five feet broad and fifty feet high, built all of stone and fragrant cedar wood. The stones were all made ready at the quarry, and there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house while it was in building. It was built about a court, like most oriental houses, and around the inside wall rooms were built, growing broader as they went up. Those on the lowest floor were eight feet broad; those on the next ten, and the third eleven; and they were all of equal height, eight feet perhaps. They were designed as dwelling-places for the priests who should serve in the Temple. The door for the lowest of these side chambers was on the right side of the house, and they went up by winding stairs into the middle rooms, and out of the middle into the third. This edifice, however, was only the entrance, so to speak, of the true House of God, which was a small building forming the rear side of the court-yard. It was built entirely of the beautiful cedar wood, and was perhaps thirty-five feet square, with a broad porch running across the front, and it was called the "Oracle," or the Most Holy Place. Here was to be the final home of the Ark of the Lord. The roofs of the Temple and the Oracle were supported by great beams of cedar, and were made of cedar themselves; and the walls inside were lined with cedar; only the floors were made of cypress wood.

The Oracle was lined with cedar, but here the wood was carved with knops or gourds and open flowers, and overlaid

with pure gold of Parvaim; and there were chains of gold across before the entrance.

Inside the Oracle stood an altar, also of cedar overlaid with gold, guarded on either side by the sacred figure of a cherubim. The cherubim, as I think I told you before, were great winged beasts. Those in the Temple were sixteen feet high, and had wings eight feet long; and they were stretched forth so that the wings of the one touched one wall and the wings of the other touched the other wall; and their wings touched each other in the midst of the house, and their faces were turned toward the altar. They were built of olive wood, and overlaid with gold; and on the walls, both within and without the house, other cherubim were carved, and palm trees and more flowers, and the walls were garnished with precious stones.

The doors into the Oracle were made of cypress wood, carved like the walls; and the door-posts were of olive and the hinges of gold. These doors opened into the inner court, around which there ran three rows of stone and one row of cedar pillars. In this court, in front of the entrance to the Oracle, stood two great columns, fifty feet high wrought out of brass by the artificer Hiram, and the tops thereof were of lily-work, and between them hung chains of brass with brazen pomegranates suspended from them. The right-hand pillar was called "Jachin," which means, "He shall establish"; and the other one was called "Boaz," or "In it is strength."

In the midst of the court stood a great basin of brass, so large that it was called "the molten sea," where the priests washed before they sacrificed in the Temple. This basin stood upon twelve oxen, cast out of brass, three looking to the east, three to the west, three to the north, and three to the south; and the brim of it was wrought like a cup, like the flowers of a lily. This "molten sea" was so large that

it held two thousand baths Around it stood ten smaller basins, which were for washing the utensils needed at the sacrifices, the pots and shovels and flesh-hooks of bright brass that Hiram made.

Inside the Oracle there stood, as we know already, the high altar, and before it hung a veil, behind which only the high priest was privileged to pass. This veil was of blue and purple and crimson and fine linen, and was embroidered with cherubim. Next the altar stood a table, also of gold, where the sacred bread, called the shew-bread, was kept; and on each side of it were five candlesticks of pure gold.

Solomon also had made for the Oracle tongs and cups and snuffers and basins and spoons and firepans of gold, besides all the vessels of gold and silver that his father David had already dedicated to the use of the Temple.

When the Temple was finally finished, and the last golden snuffer in its place, Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, to bring up the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord; and all the men of Israel assembled themselves unto King Solomon at the feast in the month Ethanim, which is the seventh month. And all the elders of Israel came, and the priests took up the Ark, and the tent of meeting that had sheltered it so long, and all the holy vessels that were in the tent, and brought them up to the Temple, where King Solomon and all the congregation were assembled to receive them.

And, dreadful as it seems to us, their idea of doing honor to God was to kill innocent animals, and we are told that the sheep and oxen that were sacrificed on this occasion could not be counted for multitude.

At last the priests brought in the Ark unto its place in the Oracle of the house, to the Most Holy Place, even under the wings of the cherubim. It is interesting to

know that there was nothing in the Ark save the two tables of stone which Moses put there at Horeb, when the Lord made a covenant with the Children of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt. The Levites, who were the singers as well as priests, and their sons and their brethren were arrayed in fine linen, and carried cymbals and psalteries and harps; and when the Ark had been carried in, they stood at the east end of the altar, and with them an hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets; and the trumpeters and singers were as one to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord. And it came to pass that when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music and praised the Lord, saying: "For He is good, for his mercy endureth forever," that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house.

Then spake Solomon:

"The Lord hath said that he would dwell in thick darkness. I have surely built thee a house of habitation, a place for thee to dwell in forever."

And the king turned his face about and blessed all the congregation of Israel. And he told them how his father David had wished to build a temple for the Lord, but how it had been left to his son to fulfill his desire. And then Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands to heaven, and prayed.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

"O Lord, the God of Israel, there is no God like thee, in heaven above or on earth beneath, who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart, who hast kept with my father David thy

servant that which thou didst promise him: yea, thou spakest with thy mouth and hast fulfilled it with thine hands, as it is this day.

"But will God, in very deed, dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have builded! Yet have thou respect unto the prayer of thy servant and to his supplication, O Lord my God, to hearken unto the cry and to the prayer which thy servant prayeth before thee this day: that thine eyes may be open towards this house night and day, even toward the place whereof thou hast said, 'My name shall be there.' And hearken thou to the supplication of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, when they shall pray towards this place: yea, hear thou in heaven, thy dwelling-place; and when thou hearest, forgive.

"If a man sin against his neighbor and an oath be laid upon him, to cause him to swear, and he come and swear before thine altar in this house: then hear thou in heaven and do, and judge thy servants, considering the wicked to bring his way upon his own head; and justifying the righteous, to give him according to his righteousness.

"When thy people Israel be smitten down before the enemy, because they have sinned against thee; if they turn again to thee and confess thy name, and pray and make supplication unto thee in this house: then hear thou in heaven and forgive the sin of thy people Israel.

"When heaven is shut up and there is no rain, because they have sinned against thee; if they pray towards this place, and confess thy name and turn from their sins, when thou dost afflict them: then hear thou in heaven, and forgive the sins of thy servants and of thy people Israel, when thou teachest them the good way wherein they should walk; and send rain upon the land which thou hast given to thy people for an inheritance.

"If there be in the land famine, if there be pestilence, if there be blasting or mildew, locust or caterpillar; if their enemy besiege them in the land of their cities: whatsoever plague, whatsoever sickness there be; what prayer and supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy people Israel, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands towards this house: then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling-place and forgive, and do and render unto every man according to all his ways, whose heart thou knowest: (for thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men).

"Moreover, concerning the stranger that is not of thy people Israel, when he shall come from a far country for thy great name's sake, and thy mighty hand and thy stretched-out arm; when they shall come and pray toward this house: then hear thou from heaven thy dwelling-place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for.

"If thy people go out to battle against their enemies, by whatsoever way thou shalt send them, and they pray unto thee toward this city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name: then hear thou from heaven their prayer and maintain their cause.

"If they sin against thee (for there is no man that sinneth not), and thou be angry with them and deliver them to the enemy, so that they carry them away captive to a land far off or near; yet if they shall bethink themselves in the land whither they are carried captive, and turn again and make supplication unto thee, saying, 'We have sinned, we have done perversely, and have dealt wickedly;' if they return unto thee with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their captivity and turn toward the house which I have built to thy name: then hear thou from heaven thy dwelling-place their prayer and supplication, and main-

tain their cause; and forgive thy people which have sinned against thee.

"Now, O my Lord, let, I beseech thee, thine eyes be open, and let thine ears be attent, unto the prayer that is made in this place.

"Now, therefore, arise, O Lord God, into thy resting-place, thou and the Ark of thy strength; let thy priests, O Lord God, be clothed with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in goodness. O Lord God, turn not away the face of thine anointed: remember the good deeds of David thy servant."

Now, when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt-offering and the sacrifice, and the glory of the Lord filled the house; and all the Children of Israel, looking on, bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshiped and gave thanks unto the Lord, saying:

"For He is good, for His mercy endureth forever."

So Solomon held the feast at that time seven days, and all Israel with him, a very great congregation, from the entering in of Hamath unto the brook of Egypt. And on the eighth day they made a closing festival to the king, and he sent the people away unto their tents, joyful and glad of heart for the goodness that the Lord had shewed unto David and to Solomon and to Israel his people.

CHAPTER XXVI

KING SOLOMON

Solomon reigned over Israel for forty years, and his reign was a time of unparalleled prosperity and splendor. Ever afterwards the Israelites looked back to those days with longing, and his name in time became the synonym for all that was magnificent and to be desired. His wisdom was as far-famed as his riches.

It was said of him that when he was first made king, and went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, as was the custom, he had a wonderful dream, in which the Lord appeared to him by night, and bade him ask for his heart's desire. And Solomon, instead of asking for power or riches, prayed humbly for the power to discern between good and evil.

And it pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing, and his wisdom increased from that day.

Soon after he had occasion to deliver a judgment that made his understanding to be respected wherever the story was heard. Two women came to the king and stood before him, and the one said:

"O my lord, I and this other woman dwell in one house, and I had a child born to me there, and the third day after this woman had a child also; and we were together; there was no stranger with us in the house, save we two. And this woman's child died in the night, and she arose at midnight and took my son from beside me, while thine handmaid slept, and laid it in her bosom, and laid her dead child in my bosom. And when I rose in the

morning to feed the child, behold, it was dead: but when I had considered it in the morning, behold, it was not my son."

And the second woman said:

"Nay, but the living is my son and the dead is thy son."

And the first insisted:

"No, but the dead is thy son and the living is my son."

Thus they spoke before the king.

Then said the king, thoughtfully:

"The one saith, This is my son that liveth and thy son is the dead: and the other saith, Nay, but thy son is the dead and my son is the living." And he said:

"Fetch me a sword."

And they brought a sword before the king, and he pronounced judgment, saying:

"Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one and half to the other."

Then spake out the true mother:

"O my lord, give her the living child, and in no wise slay it."

But the other woman, who had stolen the baby, said with cruel satisfaction:

"It shall be neither mine nor thine; divide it."

But King Solomon knew that the child belonged to the woman who would rather see it given to another than slain, and he said:

"Give her the living child, and in no wise slay it: she is the mother thereof."

And all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had judged; and they feared the king, for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him.

Solomon not only built the great Temple, but he made a palace for himself that took thirteen years in finishing. It was built all of cedar of Lebanon and hewn stone, like the

Temple, and, like it also, was built around a court-yard, and it had a porch of pillars where the king sat to hear the complaints of his subjects. This was called the Porch of Judgment.

Around the great court-yard ran three rows of stone columns and one of cedar, again like those in the Temple. The king's throne was of ivory, inlaid with pure gold, and there were six steps that led up to it, with a footstool of gold fastened to the throne, and arms on either side of the seat supported by two lions carved out of ivory, and on each of the six steps stood two ivory lions; there was not the like made in any kingdom.

Along one side of the great court ran the house allotted to Solomon's first and most important wife, a princess of Egypt, daughter of King Pharaoh, with whom Solomon had made affinity.

Solomon furnished all the palace with drinking vessels and all manner of articles of gold, for silver was nothing accounted of in his days; and we are told that the provision for his household for one day was:

30 measures of fine flour;
60 measures of meal;
10 fat oxen;
20 oxen out of the pasture;
100 sheep;

besides harts, gazelles, roebucks and fatted fowl.

The king's stables also were well furnished. Up to this time horses had been a great luxury, and men rode ordinarily upon mules or asses, or for long journeys they had camels. But Solomon had horses brought from Egypt and other lands, and we hear that four thousand chariot horses stood in his stalls, and steeds for twelve thousand horsemen. This mounted guard was distributed between

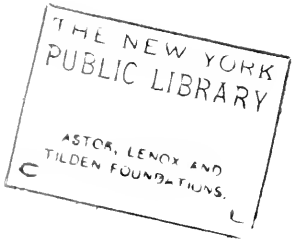
Jerusalem and others of the chief cities. Barley and straw were provided daily for the royal stables; his officers let nothing be lacking.

The chief source of Solomon's wealth was the gold of Ophir, for in conjunction with his friend King Hiram of Tyre, he had fitted out a fleet, the first possessed by the Israelites. His ships started out from the port of Ezion-geber, at the head of the Gulf of Elath, that runs into the Red Sea, and sailed down the Red Sea into the Indian Ocean, and so across to Ophir, which is the country we know as India. It was wild and uncivilized in Solomon's day, and his ships fetched from thence immense treasures of gold. He received tribute of gold and silver also from the kings and governors of Arabia, and other magnates, so that he had five hundred shields and targets of beaten gold made for his bodyguard. These hung ordinarily in the palace, and were only used on great occasions. The king had another smaller fleet or navy on the Mediterranean Sea. This went to Tarshish in Asia Minor with King Hiram's servants, and came home laden with treasure and curiosities,—more gold and silver and ivory, and apes and peacocks to amuse the king's children, and algum trees for the terraces of the Temple and the palace, and precious stones of all kinds, and raiment and armor and spices.

Solomon liked strange animals and plants. We are told that "he spake of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts; and of fowl; and of creeping things, and of fishes." Would you know from that that he composed the first books on botany and natural history?

Solomon had given to King Hiram twenty cities in the land of Galilee, called the "land of Cabul," in return for six score talents of gold. He caused to be built other cities for himself—Beth-horon the nether, and Baalath, and

SOLOMON ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS OF THE QUEEN OF SHEBA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Tamar in the wilderness, besides store-cities. Store-cities were places where the surplus harvests were stored away in case of famine. He also rebuilt the town of Gezer, which King Pharaoh had given to his daughter as a part of her dowry when she became the wife of Solomon.

Solomon's reputation for wisdom increased with every year, so that there came of all peoples to hear him discourse, from all kings of the earth to hear his words.

The name of one royal visitor has come down to us, clothed in mystery, the mythical Queen of Sheba who heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord, and came to prove him with hard questions.

We do not know where Sheba was, but one theory is that it was the old name for Abyssinia. Abyssinia is a country in Africa, a little to the southwest of the Red Sea; and what makes the belief that it was the ancient Sheba especially interesting, is that one portion of its present inhabitants, the Agows, are thought to be descended from the old Phœnicians, who, as you know, were great colonists.

So possibly the Queen of Sheba was a cousin of Solomon's friend, King Hiram of Tyre.

Wherever Sheba may have been, the queen of the country came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bare spices and very much gold, and precious stones; and when she was come to Solomon she communed with him of all that was in her heart.

And Solomon told her all her questions; there was not anything hid from the king that he told her not. And when the Queen of Sheba had seen all the wisdom of Solomon, and the house that he had built, and the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cup-bearers, and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the

Lord; there was no more spirit (or pride) in her. And she said to the king:

"It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy sayings and of thy wisdom. Howbeit, I believed not the words until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard. Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee and hear thy wisdom. Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighteth in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel."

And she gave the king an hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices very great store, and precious stones; there came no more such abundance of spices as these which the Queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon.

And King Solomon gave to her all her desire, whatsoever she asked, beside that which he gave her of his royal bounty. So she turned and went to her own land, she and her servants.

Solomon had many other wives besides the Egyptian princess, and some of them came from distant lands and worshiped God in a different way from the Israelites, but the king would in no wise hinder them from praying after their own manner, and he even built places of worship for them, where they could hold such services as suited them. But this displeased many of the king's subjects. They had no sympathy for any religion but their own, and disliked Solomon's freedom of opinion, and gradually a division arose among the people. The leader of the opposite party was called Jeroboam, a mighty man of valor. Solomon had noticed this young man's industry, when the Temple was building, and had given him charge over the workmen; but his ambition was kindled by the words of the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite, and he set himself against

Solomon. Ahijah was a narrow-minded man, and hated Solomon because he tolerated the practice of strange religions in Jerusalem; and one day he met Jeroboam walking alone in a field outside Jerusalem. Now Ahijah was clad in a new garment, and when he saw Jeroboam he tore it in twelve pieces, and said unto him:

"Take these ten pieces: for thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel: 'Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee.' "

A prophet was supposed to be an inspired person, and these words coming from Ahijah were enough to set Jeroboam's imagination on fire. He returned to the city, and immediately commenced to plot against Solomon. But the king heard something of what had happened, and he sought the life of Jeroboam, who fled for safety to Egypt, where King Shishak had succeeded Solomon's father-in-law on the throne. We shall hear more of Jeroboam later.

This was the only trouble in King Solomon's glorious reign. No war disturbed the people. Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig-tree, from Dan even to Beersheba.

God gave the king wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the seashore.

His sayings are written down in the Book of Proverbs; and there has also come down to us a beautiful love-song, called Solomon's Song, though many people doubt whether he wrote it himself. He ruled over all the kings from the river (Euphrates) even unto the land of the Philistines, and to the border of Egypt, and he made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones, and cedars made he to be as the sycamore trees that are in the lowlands, for abundance.

But at last he slept with his fathers, and they took up his body and buried it in the city he had made so beautiful, even in the city of David his father, and Rehoboam, his son, reigned in his stead.

CHAPTER XXVII

JUDAH AND ISRAEL

Rehoboam was a weak and foolish young man, unworthy in every way to succeed to the throne of his father and grandfather. His first important decision alienated forever the affections of half his people, and split in two the ancient kingdom of Israel. When Solomon died, Rehoboam proceeded to Shechem for his coronation, where all the tribes of Israel were come to make him king. Shechem had been in a certain way a sacred place, ever since Joshua called the Children of Israel to meet him there to hear his final words before they separated to take possession of their new homes in the Promised Land; and now Rehoboam found an undivided people assembled at his summons, even as Joshua had left them four hundred years before. But they were not without dissension. The northern tribes, or the tribes of Israel, as they had come to be called, had been jealous of the powerful tribe of Judah ever since the days of Absalom's conspiracy, and during Solomon's reign their discontent had greatly increased. He had laid heavy taxes upon the people to enable him to meet the usual royal expenses, while the gold of Ophir and the wealth from other sources he expended on beautifying the Temple, and in personal luxuries.

And now the people of the North, those who paid the larger share of the taxes and had the smaller chance of enjoying the glories of Jerusalem, resolved that they could bear the burden no longer, and that they must ask the new

king to lighten it. At the head of these impatient spirits was Jeroboam. He had lived in Egypt until the news came of King Solomon's death, when his friends had called him home to present their petition to Rehoboam. Accordingly, after the coronation at Shechem was accomplished, Jeroboam, with most of the congregation at his back, came before the king and spoke in this fashion:

"Thy father made our yoke grievous: now, therefore, make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee."

Rehoboam, not knowing what answer to give, said:

"Depart yet for three days and come again to me."

And the people departed. Then King Rehoboam sought advice. First he took counsel with the old men, that had stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, saying:

"What counsel give ye me to return answer to this people?"

And the old men in their wisdom advised yielding to the petition.

"If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day," said they, "and wilt serve them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants forever."

But Rehoboam forsook the counsel of the old men, and took counsel with the young men that were grown up with him, that stood before him.

"What counsel give ye," he asked them, "that we may return answer to this people, who have spoken to me, saying, 'Make the yoke that thy father did put upon us lighter'?"

And the young men said:

"Thus shalt thou say unto the people, 'Now whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your

yoke: my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.' "

So when Jeroboam and his followers returned to the king on the third day, he forsook the counsel of the old men, and answered them roughly, saying to them the words the young men had put in his mouth:

"My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke: my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions."

And naturally at these words the people were grieved and indignant, and they answered the king in the old complaint:

"What portion have we in David? Neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse."

And then one among them gave the ancient war-cry, "To your tents, O Israel." And the people added to it the ominous words, "Now see to thine own house, O David"; and departed every man his own way.

Rehoboam was frightened at the effect of his own words, and sent Adoniram, the officer in command of the levy, to parley with his rebellious subjects; but when they saw him coming they stoned him to death, and Rehoboam, more and more alarmed, made speed to get him up to his chariot and flee to Jerusalem.

And when the men of Israel heard that the king had run away, they assembled together to choose a new king for themselves, and Jeroboam was the man they decided upon. They made him king over all Israel; there was none that followed the house of David but the tribe of Judah only.

So, from henceforth in following the story of the Children of Abraham, we will have to go back and forth between the two small kingdoms, first learning what happened to David's descendants in Jerusalem, and then flying

up to the north to see what became of Jeroboam's new kingdom.

When Rehoboam was safe inside Jerusalem he assembled all the house of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin that was included in it, an hundred and fourscore thousand chosen men, which were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel, to bring the kingdom again to the son of Solomon. But in the midst of the warlike preparations a prophet appeared among them, a man of God called Shemaiah. He stood in the midst of the city and addressed all the people, saying:

"Speak unto Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and unto all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the rest of the people, saying: 'Thus saith the Lord, Ye shall not go up nor fight against your brethren, the Children of Israel: return every man to his house; for this thing is of me.' "

And the citizens hearkened unto Shemaiah's words, leaving Rehoboam to rage as he liked at the fading away of his army.

Jeroboam meanwhile was in the hill country of Ephraim, busy establishing his own kingdom. He selected Shechem as his capital city, and rebuilt and fortified it; and he also laid out another city, called Penuel; but he saw that his chief danger lay in the journey that his people took every year to attend the religious services at the Temple in Jerusalem. He said to himself: "If this people go up to offer sacrifice in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam, king of Judah: and they may kill me and return to Rehoboam, king of Judah." Whereupon the king took counsel, and decided to make a temple or Holy Place of his own, where the people might come down to make their annual festivals.

It was a good plan, but he carried it out in a poor way, for he made two calves of gold, and set up one in Bethel and the other in Dan, and said to the people:

"Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. Ye have gone up long enough to Jerusalem."

And the people, like their forefathers in the wilderness, believed this story, and went to worship the images.

Then Jeroboam made houses of high place for his calves, and made priests from among the people to serve them, and ordained a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, like the great feast at Jerusalem, when the people should offer sacrifices to their new gods.

When the feast-day came the people met together at Bethel, and Jeroboam went up to burn incense before the golden calf; but just as he was standing before the altar, a voice rang out from the crowd with these words:

"O altar, altar, thus saith the Lord: . . . Behold, the altar shall be rent and the ashes that are upon it shall be destroyed."

And it came to pass that when King Jeroboam heard these words he paused midway in his sacrifice, and put forth his hand from the altar, saying:

"Lay hold on him."

He meant, of course, the man who had dared to speak these words. But his hand, which he put forth against the man, dried up, so that he could not draw it back again, and all in a moment the altar was rent in two and the ashes poured out, even as the voice had said.

Then Jeroboam saw that a man of God or a prophet had spoken, and he called him to him, and said humbly:

"Entreat now the favor of the Lord thy God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored me again."

And the man of God entreated the Lord, and the king's hand was restored him again, and became as it was before.

Then Jeroboam said in his gratitude:

"Come home with me and refresh thyself, and I will give thee a reward."

But the man answered:

"If thou wilt give me half thine house, I will not go in with thee, neither will I eat bread nor drink water in this place: for so was it charged me by the word of the Lord, saying, Thou shalt eat no bread, nor drink water, neither return by the way that thou camest."

So he went by another way, and returned not by the way that he came to Bethel.

Now, there dwelt an old prophet in Bethel, and one of his sons came and told him all that the strange man of God had done that day, and the words that he had spoken unto the king, and their father said unto them:

"Which way went he?"

Now, his sons had seen what way the man of God went, and when they told him, he said:

"Saddle me the ass;" and when they saddled it, he rode forth thereon. And he went after the man of God, and came up to him as he was sitting under an oak, and he said to him:

"Art thou the man of God that camest from Judah?"

And he said·

"I am."

Then said the old prophet:

"Come home with me and eat bread."

But the stranger answered as before:

"I may not return with thee nor go in with thee: neither will I eat bread nor drink water with thee in this place: for it was said to me by the word of the Lord, Thou shalt eat

no bread nor drink water there, nor turn again to go by the way that thou camest."

Then said the old man:

"I also am a prophet as thou art; and an angel spake unto me, saying, Bring him back with thee unto thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water."

But this was not true, for the old man only wanted the glory of entertaining the holy stranger, who had refused to accept the invitation of the king himself. However, the man of God believed him, and went back with him and ate and drank at his house, and after he had finished the prophet saddled his ass for him, and he set out on his homeward journey; but before he had gone more than a few miles out of the city, a lion met him by the way and slew him, and his carcass was left in the way, with only his poor ass standing by it.

By and by men passed by and saw him lying there, and they came and told it in Bethel, where the old prophet lived, and when he heard it he said at once:

"It is the man of God."

And again he bade his sons saddle his ass, and set forth to hunt for him. And he found the carcass lying in the way, and the ass and the lion standing by it; the lion had not eaten the carcass nor torn the ass. And the prophet took up the body of the man of God, and laid him upon the ass, and brought him back to the city, to mourn and bury him. And he laid him in his own grave; and they mourned over him, saying:

"Alas, my brother!"

And it came to pass after they had buried the stranger that the old man said to his sons:

"When I am dead, then bury me in the sepulchre wherein the man of God is buried; lay my bones beside his bones."

Soon after this Abijah, the son of King Jeroboam, fell sick. And Jeroboam said to his wife:

"Arise, I pray thee, and disguise thyself, that thou be not known to be the wife of Jeroboam: and get thee to Shiloh: behold, there is Ahijah, the prophet, which spake concerning me that I should be king over this people. And take with thee ten loaves, and cracknels, and a cruse of honey, and go to him: he shall tell thee what shall become of the child."

And Jeroboam's wife did so, and went to Shiloh, and came to the house of Ahijah. Now, Ahijah could not see, for his eyes were set by reason of his age, but when he heard the sound of the feet of Jeroboam's wife, as she came in at the door, he called out:

"Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam; why feignest thou thyself to be another? For I am sent to thee with heavy tidings."

And he said to the poor woman:

"Go tell Jeroboam, thus saith the Lord: Forasmuch as I exalted thee among the people and made thee prince over Israel, and yet thou hast not been as my servant David, who kept my commandments, but hast done evil above all that were before thee, and hast gone and made thee other gods and molten images, . . . behold, I will bring evil upon the house of Jeroboam. Arise thou therefore, get thee to thine house, and when thy feet enter into the city, the child shall die."

And Jeroboam's wife arose and departed, and came to her house at Tirzah, and as she came to the threshold of the house, the child died. And all Israel buried him and mourned for him.

Jeroboam warred and reigned for many years after this, but we are told no more about his kingdom until Nadab, his son, came to the throne.

In Jerusalem things had been going very badly with King Rehoboam. The people had followed the example of their brethren in Shechem, and had built them high places of worship, and had erected Asherim, or false images, on every high hill and under every green tree. And in the fifth year of his reign King Shishak of Egypt, the friend of Jeroboam, invaded the land and came up against Jerusalem with twelve hundred chariots and threescore thousand horsemen; and the people were without number that came with him out of Egypt; the Lubim, the Sukkiim, and the Ethiopians. He took away the treasures of the house of the Lord and of the king's house; he took all away; and he took away also the shields of gold which Solomon had made. And King Rehoboam made in their stead shields of brass, and committed them into the hand of the captains of the guard which kept the door of the king's house. And it was so, that as oft as the king went into the house of the Lord, the guard bare them, and brought them back into the guard chamber.

This disastrous inroad of the enemy crippled the reign of King Rehoboam, though he strengthened himself and continued to rule for twelve years more. He had married several wives, but the one he loved above all the others was Maacah, Absalom's daughter, and therefore a cousin of his own. For her sake he appointed her son Abijah to be chief, even prince among his brethren, and he was minded to make him king. And he dealt wisely, and to prevent jealousy and ill-will, he dispersed his other sons throughout all the lands of Judah and Benjamin, unto every fenced city. He gave them all liberal allowances, and sought for them many wives. He seems to have been a better father than he was a king.

Now, from this time on the history of the two kingdoms becomes dreadfully confusing, and I think our best way to

understand it is to make out for reference two parallel tables of the rulers of both kingdoms, and only spend time on the ones that have interesting stories told about them. It will be clearer to you if you remember that in Israel, or Samaria, as it came to be called, the throne was always being usurped, and one sovereign put to death by another; while in Judah the kingdom descended in orderly line from father to son.

More remarkable than any king, however, was the strange man we hear about at this time, the prophet Elijah. He and his disciple and friend, Elisha, had more influence over the Israelites than their professed rulers. And it is to them that we will now turn our thoughts.

KING SOLOMON.

Kings of Judah.	*Kings of Israel or Samaria.*
Rehoboam.	Jeroboam.
Abijah.	
Asa.	Nadab.
	Baasha.
	Elah.
	Zimri.
	Omri.
Jehoshaphat.	Ahab.
	Ahaziah.
Jehoram.	Jehoram.
Ahaziah.	
Joash.	Jehu.
	Jehoahaz.
Amaziah.	Joash.
	Jeroboam II.
Azariah or Uzziah.	Zechariah.
Jotham.	Shallum.
	Menahem.

Kings of Judah.	*Kings of Israel or Samaria.*
Ahaz.	Pekahiah.
	Pekah.
Hezekiah.	Hoshea.
Manasseh.	
Amon.	
Josiah.	
Jehoahaz.	Captivity and Lost Tribes.
Jehoiakim.	
Jeohiachin.	
Zedekiah.	
Captivity.	

CHAPTER XXVIII

ELIJAH

Of the reigns of Abijah and Asa, the son and grandson of King Rehoboam of Judah, there is very little to be told. Both sovereigns were occupied in an almost continuous war with the kings of Samaria, and Asa is said to have made a league against them with Ben-hadad, king of Syria, that dwelt at Damascus. Asa was also distinguished for his great piety. He put out of his kingdom all statues of false gods, and prohibited the worship of them, and he was so much in earnest that he removed his own mother from being "queen mother," because she had made an abominable image for an Asherah, and he had the image itself burnt and the dust of it thrown in the brook Kidron. He died of the gout in the forty-first year of his reign; being "diseased in his feet: his disease was exceeding great," the old Chronicle tells us. And they buried him in his own sepulchre, which he had hewn out for himself in the city of David, and laid him in the bed which was filled with sweet odors and divers kinds of spices prepared by the apothecaries' art.

In the kingdom of Samaria, during Asa's reign in Judah, affairs went by no means smoothly. Nadab, the son of Jeroboam, had been dethroned by Baasha, the son of Ahijah of the house of Issachar. Baasha reigned for twenty years, and was succeeded by his son Elah, who in his turn was put out by Zimri, the captain of his chariots. Zimri killed Elah and all his household, but he only

enjoyed his ill-gotten kingdom a few weeks, for the Israelites would not have him as their ruler, and chose Omri, the captain of the host, for king in his stead. Omri marched against Zimri with an overwhelming force, and the wretched man, seeing that all was lost for him, shut himself inside his palace and set fire to it, perishing himself in the flames. Then Omri became king of Israel, and brought something like security and peace to his people; and in time he was succeeded by his son Ahab, over whose reign we must linger for some pages. It is here that we first meet with Elijah's name.

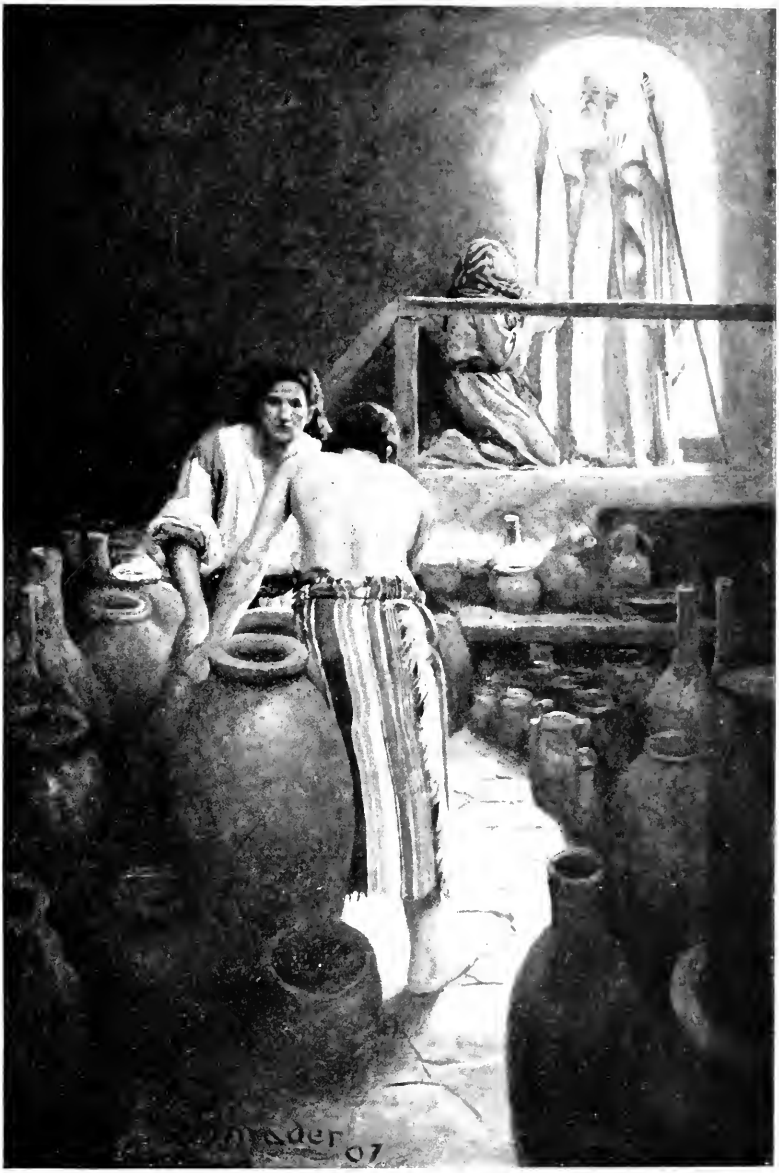
Ahab married a daughter of the king of the Zidonians, Jezebel by name, a woman of evil mind and strong will, who gained an absolute power over her weak husband. By her influence Ahab was led into the worship of the false god Baal, and scandalized his subjects by building altars to him everywhere. This impiety particularly aroused the indignation of the one among the sojourners of Gilead, a man called Elijah the Tishbite. In his zeal for the cause of the Lord, he came from Gilead to Samaria, and made his way to King Ahab's presence, and threatened him with punishment for his departure from the old religion, saying:

"As the Lord, the God of Israel, liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain for three years."

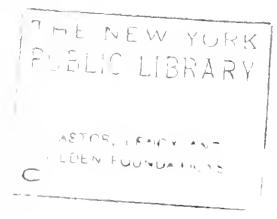
At these words the king became violently angry, and Elijah was obliged to fly for his life. But the word of the Lord told him where to go, and a voice in the night said to him:

"Get thee hence and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the Brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And it shall be that thou shalt drink of the brook: and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there."

And he went and dwelt by the Brook Cherith, and the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and



ELIJAH AND THE WIDOW'S CRUSE OF OIL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bread and flesh in the evening, and he drank of the brook and day and night he prayed and meditated. And it came to pass after a while that the brook dried up because there was no rain in the land, and the word of the Lord came again to Elijah, saying:

"Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee."

So he arose and went to Zarephath; and when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow woman was there gathering sticks; and Elijah called to her and said:

"Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink."

And as she was going to fetch it, he called:

"Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand."

And she answered him:

"As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in the barrel, and a little oil in the cruse; and behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it and die."

For they were very poor. But Elijah said unto her:

"Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it forth unto me, and afterwards make for thee and for thy son. For thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, 'The barrel shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth.'"

And the woman believed him, and went and did according to his saying; and she and he and her house did eat many days. The barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord which he spake by Elijah.

And it came to pass after these things that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so sore that there was no breath left in him, and his mother called to Elijah in her grief:

"What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? Art thou come unto me to bring my sins to remembrance, and to slay my son?"

And he said unto her:

"Give me thy son."

And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into the chamber where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed. And he cried unto the Lord, saying:

"O Lord my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son?"

And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the Lord again, saying:

"O Lord my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again."

And the Lord hearkened unto Elijah, and as he prayed the child revived, and he took him and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother, saying:

"See, thy son liveth."

What was thus her joy!

"Now," cried she, "I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth."

Elijah continued to live with the widow woman, and his fame spread throughout the land. Now all this time there had been no rain in Samaria, and the harvests had failed by reason of the drought, and the cattle everywhere were dying of hunger; and King Ahab sent at last for his servant Obadiah, who was over his household, and said unto him:

"Go through the land, unto all the fountains of water,

and unto all the brooks: peradventure we may find grass and save the horses and mules alive, that we lose not all the beasts."

So they divided the land between them to pass throughout it; Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself. And as Obadiah was on his road, behold, Elijah met him, and Obadiah recognized the holy man of God, and fell on his face, and said:

"Is it thou, my lord Elijah?"

And Elijah answered him:

"It is I: go tell thy Lord, Behold, Elijah is here."

Now Obadiah was a good man, and once, when the wicked Queen Jezebel had made a law to cut off all the prophets of the Lord, he had hidden an hundred and fifty of them in a cave and fed them with bread and water until they could escape; but he knew that Ahab's anger was fierce against Elijah, on account of the lack of rain, and he dared not go to him with such a message.

"Wherein have I sinned?" he said to Elijah, "that thou wouldest deliver thy servant into the hands of Ahab, to slay me? As the Lord thy God liveth, there is no nation or kingdom whither my lord hath not sent to seek thee: and when they said, 'He is not here,' he took an oath of the kingdom or nation that they found thee not. And now thou sayest, 'Go tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here.' And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from thee, that the spirit of the Lord shall carry thee whither I know not; and so when I am come to tell Ahab and he cannot find thee, he shall slay me."

But Elijah calmed his fears.

"As the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand," he said, "I will surely show myself unto Ahab this day."

So Obadiah went to meet Ahab and told him, and Ahab went to meet Elijah.

And when they came together, Ahab's first words were: "Is it thou, thou troubler of Israel?"

And Elijah answered:

"I have not troubled Israel, but thou and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed the Baalim."

After these bold words Elijah and Ahab had a long conference, and Elijah proposed a plan to the king.

"Send and gather to me all Israel," he said, "unto Mount Carmel, and also the prophets of Baal, four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the Asherah, four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table."

And Ahab, being curious to see what Elijah meant to do, agreed to his request.

All the prophets and the people were assembled on Mount Carmel accordingly, and Elijah came before them and addressed them with these words:

"How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him."

And the people answered him not a word. Then said Elijah:

"I, even I only, am left a prophet of the Lord; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. Let them, therefore, give us two bullocks: and let them choose one bullock for themselves and cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood and put no fire under: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on the wood and put no fire under. And call ye on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the Lord: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God."

And all the people answered and said:

"It is well spoken."

Elijah then turned to the prophets of Baal, and said:

"Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it

first; for ye are many: and call on the name of your god, but put no fire under."

And they took the bullock which was given them, and dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, "O Baal, hear us." But there was no voice nor any that answered. And they leaped about the altar which was made. And at noon Elijah mocked them, saying:

"Cry aloud; for he is a god; either he is musing or he is gone aside, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth and must be awakened."

This enraged the priests, and they cried aloud, and cut themselves after the manner of their worship with knives and lances, till the blood gushed out upon them. And it was so, when midday was past, that they prophesied until the time of the evening oblation; but there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.

Then Elijah bade all the people come near unto him, and he repaired the altar of the Lord that was thrown down, taking for this work twelve stones, according to the number of the sons of Jacob, and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed. And he laid the wood ready, and cut the bullock in pieces and laid it on the wood. And he said:

"Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt offering and on the wood."

And he said:

"Do it the second time;" and again, "Do it the third time."

And the water ran around the altar; and he filled the trench also. And at the time of the offering of the evening oblation, Elijah came near and prayed, saying:

"O Lord, the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and

that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me; that this people may know that thou, Lord, art God."

And at his words the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt offering, and the wood and the stone and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces, and said:

"The Lord, he is God; the Lord, he is God!"

As for the false prophets, the Israelites took them down to the brook Kidron, and slew them there, and when the last one lay dead, Elijah said to Ahab:

"Get thee up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of the abundance of rain."

This seemed almost too good to be true, as the sun was shining as brightly as it had every day for three years, but Ahab went to eat and drink, as Elijah had said; and Elijah himself went up to the top of Mount Carmel and bowed himself down upon the earth, with his face between his knees. Soon he said to his servant:

"Go up now, look toward the sea."

And the man went up and looked, and said:

"There is nothing."

And Elijah said:

"Go again seven times."

And it came to pass at the seventh time that the servant called:

"Behold, there ariseth a cloud out of the sea, as small as a man's hand."

Then said his master:

"Go up, say unto Ahab, 'Make ready thy chariot and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not'."

And almost before the man could go the heavens grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain on

all the thirsty land; and through the downpour Ahab hurried in his chariot to Jezebel. But when she heard what had befallen her prophets she had no thanks for the rain, but sent a messenger to Elijah, saying:

"So let the gods do to me and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time."

And Elijah arose and went for his life, and came to Beersheba in the far south, which belonged to the kingdom of Judah. Here he left his servant and went out himself a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree, and he requested for himself that he might die; for he was discouraged and sick at heart.

"It is enough," he prayed, "now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers."

And so praying, he fell asleep under the juniper tree; and behold, an angel touched him, and said unto him:

"Arise and eat."

And he looked, and behold, there was a cake baken on the hot stones, and a cruse of water. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again. Then the angel of the Lord came again the second time, and touched him, and said:

"Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for thee."

And he arose and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb, the Mount of God, the Holy Place where Moses had held converse with the Most High. Here he found shelter in a cave on the mountain-side, and lived content to be away from men until the word of the Lord came to him, asking:

"What doest thou here, Elijah?"

And he answered in bitterness of heart:

"I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of Hosts; for the Children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword: and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away."

Then said the voice:

"Go forth and stand upon the mount before the Lord."

And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still, small voice, as a sound of gentle stillness. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out and stood in the entering of the cave. And behold, again there came a voice unto him, saying:

"What doest thou here, Elijah?" and then continued:

"Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest thou shalt anoint Hazael to be king over Syria: and Jehu, the son of Nimshi, shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha, the son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room."

And when the Voice ceased Elijah departed thence straightway, and paused not until he found Elisha, the son of Shaphat. He was at his home, ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth; and Elijah passed over unto him, and cast his mantle upon him. And Elisha understood by this that he was chosen to be the disciple of the man of God, and he left the oxen and ran after Elijah.

"Let me, I pray thee," he said, "kiss my father and mother, and then I will follow thee."

But Elijah said:

"Go back again: for what have I done to thee."

And Elisha, seeing that he did not wish to be followed, went back and took his oxen, and slew them and roasted their flesh and gave it unto his people as a farewell feast. Then he arose and went after Elijah and ministered unto him.

Meantime there was war between Israel and Syria. Ben-hadad, king of Syria, gathered all his host together; and there were thirty and two kings with him, and horses and chariots; and he went up and besieged Samaria, and fought against it. And when the city was hard-pressed, he sent messengers to King Ahab, saying:

"Thus saith Ben-hadad, 'Thy silver and thy gold are mine; thy wives also and thy children, even the goodliest, are mine'."

And to these insolent words Ahab dared only reply humbly:

"It is according to thy saying, my lord, O king: I am thine and all that I have."

But Ben-hadad was not satisfied even with this, and sent again to Ahab, saying:

"I sent indeed unto thee, saying, 'Thou shalt deliver me thy silver and thy gold, and thy wives and thy children'; but I will send my servants unto thee to-morrow about this time, and they shall search thine house, and the house of thy servants; and it shall be, that whatsoever is pleasant in thine eyes, they shall put it in their hand to take it away."

This was too much for any man to stand, and Ahab sent for all the elders of Israel and consulted them.

"Mark, I pray you," he said unto them, "and see how this man seeketh mischief: for he sent unto me for my wives and my children, my silver and my gold; and I denied him not."

And the elders arose in indignation and counselled Ahab:

"Hearken thou not, neither consent."

Wherefore he said unto the messengers of Ben-hadad:

"Tell my lord the king, All that thou didst send for at the first I will do: but this thing I may not do."

And the messengers departed and brought back Ben-hadad's message in answer:

"The gods do so to me and more also if the dust of Samaria shall suffice for handfuls for all the people that follow me."

And the king of Israel answered:

"Let not him that girdeth on his armor boast himself as he that putteth it off."

This last message came to Ben-hadad as he was drinking in the pavilion of his camp before the city, and so angered him that he commanded his soldiers to instantly place their engines against the city. At this very moment a prophet came before King Ahab and said:

"Thus saith the Lord, Hast thou seen all this great multitude? Behold, I will deliver it into thine hand this day."

And Ahab said:

"By whom?" meaning through what means. And the prophet said:

"By the young men of the princes of the provinces."

Then said Ahab:

"Who shall begin battle?"

And the answer was, "Thou."

Ahab, relying on these words, mustered the young men, that is, the servants, of the princes of the provinces, and they were two hundred and thirty-two; and after them he mustered all the people, even all the Children of Israel, being seven thousand. And they went out at noon. But Ben-hadad was drinking himself intoxicated in the pavilion, he and the kings, the thirty and two kings that helped

him, and when his men came running to him with the tidings:

"There are men come out from Samaria;" he only answered heavily:

"Whether they be come out for peace, take them alive; or whether they be come out for war, take them alive."

And the men of the city came steadily on, led by the young men of the princes, and they slew every one his man until the Syrians fled before them. Israel pursued hotly, but Ben-hadad managed to escape on a horse with a party of horsemen; and Ahab's men had to be content with smiting the horses and the chariots of the lesser Syrians with a great slaughter.

As Ahab was rejoicing over his victory, the same unknown prophet came before him once more, and said solemnly:

"Go, strengthen thyself, and mark and see what thou doest, for at the return of the year the king of Syria will come up against thee."

Now, Ben-hadad's servants sought to console their master, and they said to him, speaking of the Israelites:

"Their God is a god of the hills, therefore they were stronger than we: but let us fight against them in the plains, so surely shall we be stronger than they."

And he hearkened unto their words, and at the return of the year, as the prophet had said, Ben-hadad mustered his Syrians and went up to Aphek to fight against Israel. He found Israel prepared to meet him, thanks to the prophesy; but when the Syrians filled the country the Israelites encamped before them looked like two little flocks of kids. The two armies remained in face of each other for seven days, but on the seventh day the battle was joined; and the Children of Israel slew of the Syrians one

hundred thousand footmen in one day. The rest fled to Aphek, into the city, and the wall fell upon twenty and seven thousand men that were left. And Ben-hadad hid himself in an inner chamber of a house in the midst of the city, and took counsel with his servants. They advised him to throw himself upon Ahab's mercy.

"Behold now," said they, "we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings: let us, we pray thee, put on sackcloth and ropes and go out to the king of Israel: peradventure he will save thy life."

To this plan Ben-hadad, having no better to suggest, gave consent; so his servants went in their robes of humiliation before King Ahab, and entreated:

"Thy servant Ben-hadad saith, 'I pray thee, let me live.' "

Then Ahab answered:

"Is he yet alive? He is my brother."

And the Syrians, quick to catch at the good promise of these words, said after him:

"Thy *brother* Ben-hadad."

And the king said:

"Go ye, bring him."

And when Ben-hadad was brought forth, he caused him to come up into his own chariot. And Ben-hadad said:

"The cities which my father took from thy father I will restore; and thou shalt make streets for thee in Damascus, as my father made in Samaria."

"And I," answered Ahab, "will let thee go with this covenant."

So there was peace between Syria and Israel, though the prophets were fain to be displeased with Ahab, because he had shown mercy to his enemy.

And it came to pass after these things that a man named Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard, which was in

Jezreel, hard by the palace of King Ahab in Samaria. And Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying:

"Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house; and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it: or, if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money."

But Naboth would not sell his property.

"The Lord forbid it me," he said to Ahab, "that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee."

And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased because of the words of Naboth the Jezreelite; and he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread. While he was indulging in this fit of temper, Jezebel his wife came in, and asked in surprise:

"Why is thy spirit so sad, that thou eatest no bread?"

And he told her all his vexation, but she only laughed at his weak spirit.

"Dost thou now govern this kingdom of Israel?" she said. "Arise and eat bread and let thine heart be merry. I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite."

And without telling her husband what she meant to do, the wicked queen wrote letters in Ahab's name, and sent them to the elders and nobles of the city, and she wrote in the letters:

"Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people, and set two men, sons of Belial, before him, and let them bear witness against him, saying: 'Thou didst curse God and the king.' And then carry him out and stone him that he die."

And the elders and nobles of the city did even as Jezebel had commanded them, for they were afraid to disobey. And when their poor victim had been falsely accused and condemned and put to death, they sent word to the queen:

"Naboth is stoned, and is dead."

And when she heard that he was dead, Jezebel went to Ahab, and said:

"Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give thee for money: for Naboth is not alive, but dead."

And Ahab said not a word of condemnation, but rose up as she had said, and went down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it; but when he returned to his palace, behold, Elijah the Tishbite stood waiting for him. And Ahab said:

"Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?"

And Elijah answered:

"I have found thee: because thou hast sold thyself to do that which is evil in the sight of the Lord; thus saith the Lord: 'Hast thou killed and also taken possession? In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine. Behold, I will bring evil upon thee, and will utterly sweep thee away, and will cut off from Ahab every man child, and him that is shut up and him that is at large in Israel: and I will make thine house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha, the son of Ahijah.' "

And of the queen he spake also, saying:

"The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the rampart of Jezreel. Him that dieth of Ahab in the city the dogs shall eat, and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat."

And with these terrible words the prophet departed from Samaria, for there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to do that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up.

Now, soon after this, in spite of all Ben-hadad's promises, the Syrians made another war on Israel, and in order to fight them Ahab made an alliance with Jehoshaphat,

the son of Asa, who was then king of Judah, and had come up to visit Samaria.

"Wilt thou go with me to battle against Ramoth-Gilead?" Ahab asked Jehoshaphat. And Jehoshaphat answered:

"I am as thou art, my people are thy people, my horses are thy horses, and we will be with thee in the war."

So they made their preparations for battle. But before they set out Jehoshaphat asked King Ahab to summon all the prophets and holy men together and ask their advice about the expedition; and to please him Ahab called four hundred of the prophets about him and asked:

"Shall I go against Ramoth-Gilead to battle, or shall I forbear?"

And they every one answered:

"Go up; for the Lord shall deliver it into thine hand."

But still Jehoshaphat was not satisfied.

"Is there not besides a prophet of the Lord, that we might enquire of him?" he asked.

And Ahab answered reluctantly:

"There is yet one man by whom we may enquire of the Lord, Micaiah, the son of Imlah: but I hate him, because he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil."

However, he called an officer, and said:

"Fetch quickly Micaiah, the son of Imlah."

And the two kings waited his coming.

At the time of this conversation they were sitting, each on his throne, in an open place at the entrance of the gate of Samaria, arrayed in their royal robes, with all their courtiers and the four hundred prophets standing about them. And the messenger that went to call Micaiah said unto him:

"Behold now, the words of the prophets declare good unto the king with one mouth: let thy word, I pray

thee, be like the word of one of them, and speak thou good."

But Micaiah answered:

"As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak;" and went straightway to the kings.

Then said Ahab unto him:

"Shall we go to Ramoth-Gilead to battle, or shall we forbear?"

And he answered:

"Go up and prosper; and the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king."

But Ahab saw that he was speaking from the lips only, and he said unto him:

"How many times shall I adjure thee that thou speak unto me nothing but the truth in the name of the Lord?"

Then said Micaiah:

"I saw all Israel scattered upon the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd; and the Lord said, 'These have no master; let them return every man to his house in peace'."

And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat:

"Did I not tell thee that he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?"

While Ahab was thus speaking Micaiah had involved himself in a quarrel with the other prophets. He told them that they had a lying spirit in their mouths, and their leader, Zedekiah, retorted by striking Micaiah in the face. Then Ahab interfered, and ordered his servants to carry Micaiah back unto Amon, the governor of the city, and to Joash, the king's son, and bade them put him in prison and feed him on the bread and water of affliction until he, the king, should come again in peace. To which Micaiah answered, as he was led away:

"If thou return at all in peace the Lord hath not spoken by me. Hear ye people, all of you!"

So the king of Israel and the king of Judah went up to Ramoth-Gilead, and the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat:

"I will disguise myself and go into the battle; but put thou on thy robes."

For the Syrians were particularly anxious to capture Ahab since he had triumphed over them, and Ben-hadad had commanded the thirty and two captains of his chariots, saying:

"Fight neither with small nor great, save only the king of Israel."

And it came to pass in the midst of the battle that the captain of the chariot saw Jehoshaphat in his royal dress, and said:

"Surely, it is the King of Israel," and turned aside to fight against him; and Jehoshaphat cried out. Then they saw that he was not Ahab, and they turned back from pursuing him.

And a certain man, a soldier in the ranks, drew his bow at a venture, and shot the king of Israel between the joints of his harness, but he knew not whom he had smitten, and Ahab said to the driver of his chariot:

"Turn thine hand and carry me out of the host, for I am sore wounded."

But he would not even then cease fighting, for the battle increased all day, and he had himself stayed up in his chariot against the Syrians until the blood ran out of his wound into the bottom of the chariot. And about the going down of the sun there went a cry through the host:

"Every man to his city, and every man to his country;" for the leaders saw that the day was lost, and at those words King Ahab died. His soldiers carried his body back to Samaria and buried it in state; but it so happened that his chariot was left by the pool of Samaria to be washed, and the dogs came and licked up his blood from the bot-

tom of it. Thus was accomplished a part of the prophesy of Elijah the Tishbite. We shall hear later what became of Jezebel.

So Ahab slept with his fathers, and Ahaziah, his son, reigned in his stead. Before we leave Ahab forever I must not forget to tell you that he built a very beautiful house of ivory in Samaria. Jehoshaphat of Judah also was renowned for his architecture; he built in his kingdom castles and cities of stone, and he had riches and honor in abundance. We are told that the Philistines brought him presents and silver for tribute, and the Arabians flocks, seven thousand and seven hundred rams and seven thousand and seven hundred goats. He was very pious, we know also, and made war like his father Asa against the Asherah, but he was ambitious as well, and tried to build a navy to go to Ophir for gold. It failed, however, for the ships were broken at the seaport town of Ezion-Geber. His most renowned victory was over the Ammonites and the Moabites at Mount Seir, where "Judah stood still and saw the salvation of the Lord," that is, the great host that was coming up to destroy them fell to fighting among themselves on the way, and when Jehoshaphat and his army arrived on the field of battle, they found only a multitude of dead soldiers waiting to meet them, and had to content themselves with carrying away an abundance of riches and precious jewels. When Jehoshaphat died at last in the twenty-fifth year of his reign, he was succeeded of course by his son Jehoram, who married a daughter of Ahab, king of Israel, Athaliah by name.

Ahab, you know, had been succeeded by *his* son Ahaziah, but he only reigned two years, for at the end of that time he fell through the lattice of an upper chamber in his palace at Samaria, and died in a few months from the effects of the accident. When he found himself ill, he

sent messengers hurrying away to enquire of Baalzebub, the god of Ekron, whether he should recover from his sickness, for being Jezebel's son he worshiped false gods. But these messengers never arrived at the temple of the god, for on their way thither they were stopped by an old man of commanding aspect and stern mien.

"Is it because there is no god in Israel," he asked them, "that ye go to enquire of Baalzebub, the god of Ekron? Now therefore, thus saith the Lord, 'Thou shalt not come down from the bed whither thou art gone up, but shalt surely die'."

And the messengers, seeing he knew their errand, turned back again to Samaria. Then demanded the king:

"Why is it that ye are returned?"

And they told him of the stranger they had met, and of his ominous words.

"What manner of man was he?" asked the king.

And they answered:

"He was an hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather."

Then said Ahaziah:

"It is Elijah the Tishbite."

And he sent one of his captains with fifty men in search of him. They enquired for the prophet until they found him, and behold, he dwelt on the top of a hill, and the captain called to him:

"O man of God, the king hath said, 'Come down'."

And Elijah answered:

"If I be a man of God let fire come down from heaven and consume thee and thy fifty."

And there came down fire from heaven and consumed them every one.

Then Ahaziah sent another captain with fifty more men, and the same thing happened; and when they never came back he sent another captain with his company.

But the third man went up the hill, and came and fell on his face before Elijah, and besought him, saying:

"O man of God, I pray thee, let my life and the life of these fifty thy servants be precious in thy sight."

And Elijah hearkened unto his words, and arose and went down with him unto the king. And when he came into his presence he told him:

"Thus saith the Lord: 'Forasmuch as thou hast sent messengers to enquire of Baalzebub, the god of Ekron, thou shalt not come down from the bed whither thou art gone up, but shalt surely die.'"

And he died, even as Elijah had said, and Jehoram began to reign in his stead. So, as if we were not already confused enough, we have two King Jehorams reigning at the same time, one in Israel and one in Judah!

Now, Elijah was becoming a very old man, and Elisha, his friend and servant, was never willing to be separated from him, and it happened one day as they were journeying away from Gilgal, that Elijah said:

"Tarry now, I pray thee; for the Lord hath sent me as far as Bethel."

This he said, not wishing to take Elisha so far out of his way. But Elisha replied:

"As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee."

So they both went down to Bethel. And the sons of the prophets of Bethel whispered to Elisha:

"Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master to-day?"

For their fathers had prophesied to that effect.

"Yea," said Elisha, steadfastly, "I know it; hold ye your peace."

Then said Elijah, as they were leaving Bethel:

"Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee; for the Lord hath sent me to Jericho."

And Elisha answered as before:

"As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee."

So they came to Jericho. And here also the sons of the prophets came near unto Elisha and asked him:

"Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master to-day?"

And once more he answered:

"Yes; I know it; hold ye your peace."

And Elijah said a third time:

"Tarry here, I pray thee; for the Lord hath sent me to Jordan."

But Elisha still answered as before, and the two went on together. And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went and stood over against them far off; and they two stood by Jordan. And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that the two went over on dry ground. And it came to pass, as they went, that Elijah said:

"Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken from thee."

And Elisha said:

"I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me."

And Elijah said:

"Thou hast asked a hard thing; nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so."

And as they still went on and talked, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire, which parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. Elisha saw it, and he cried:

"My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof!"

And he saw his master no more. Then Elisha took hold of his clothes and rent them in two pieces, and he took up also the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and he went back and stood by the bank of Jordan; and he took Elijah's mantle and smote the water, saying:

"Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?"

And as he did so, the waters were divided as before, and he walked over on dry ground; and when the sons of the prophets of Jericho saw it, they came to meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him, saying:

"The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha."

CHAPTER XXIX

ELISHA

Elisha took Elijah's place as the Prophet of Israel. The men of Jericho believed at first that Elijah would return, and they insisted that they must hunt the neighboring mountains and valleys lest peradventure he had been cast out of the chariot of fire; but as time went by and no search revealed him, they accepted Elisha as his successor.

The first thing that we hear of the new prophet is that on one occasion, as he was on his way from Bethel, some little children came out of a town and mocked him, crying: "Go up, thou baldhead; go up, thou baldhead;" which made Elisha so angry that he caused two great bears to come out of a neighboring wood and eat up the rude children. Now, though I do not believe that Elisha ever was so cruel, still the story has lingered in my mind, and I have never been able to like him as well as Elijah, though he did even more wonderful things. He became famous in the war of both kingdoms of Israel against the Moabites. The trouble arose in this wise. Mesha, king of Moab, was a sheep-master; and he rendered unto the king of Samaria as tribute the wool of a hundred thousand lambs, and of a hundred thousand rams. But after Ahab's death, the king of Moab rebelled against the new king, and Jehoram mustered all his men of valor to march against him and force him back into submission. Fearing that he was not strong enough to do this alone, Jehoram sent to Jehoshaphat, who was then still reigning over Judah, and secured

him for an ally, and, as they had to march through the wilderness of Edom, they asked the king of Edom to join them with his forces. But after they had made a circuit of seven days' journey there was no water for the host or for the beasts that followed them, and Jehoram, who felt responsible for the expedition, cried:

"Alas! for the Lord hath called these three kings together to deliver them into the hand of Moab."

But Jehoshaphat was a pious man, and always had great faith in prophets, and he asked:

"Is there not a prophet of the Lord, that we may enquire of the Lord by him?"

And one of Jehoram's servants answered:

"Elisha, the son of Shaphat, is here, which poured water on the hands of Elijah."

And Jehoshaphat said:

"The word of the Lord is with him;" and he and the two other kings went down at once to him. And when they were come to Elisha he said to the king of Israel:

"What have I to do with thee? Get thee to the prophets of thy father and the prophets of thy mother."

For Elisha had learned from his master to detest the name of Ahab and Jezebel. But Jehoram answered meekly:

"Nay: for the Lord hath called these three kings together to deliver them into the hands of Moab."

Which was as much as to say that the trouble was too serious to be left to the powers of the false god Baal.

And Elisha said:

"As the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee. But now bring me a minstrel."

And when a minstrel or harp-player was brought, it

came to pass that as he played, Elisha fell into a kind of sleep, and spake thus, as in a dream:

"Thus saith the Lord: 'Make the valley full of trenches. Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain, yet that valley shall be filled with water and ye shall drink, both ye and your cattle and your beasts.' And this is but a light thing in the sight of the Lord: he will also deliver the Moabite into your hand."

Then the three kings returned from Elisha, and in the morning, about the time of the offering of the oblation, behold, there came water by the way of Edom, and the country was filled with water.

Now, when the Moabites had heard that the kings were come up to fight against them, they had gathered themselves together, all that were able to put on armor and upward, and had marched to the border of their land. And the morning after the three kings had been to Elisha the Moabites rose up early, and as the sun shone upon the water in the Israelites' camp, it turned as red as blood, and they said:

"This is blood; the kings have surely fought together and they have smitten each man his fellow; now, therefore, Moab, to the spoil!"

For they could not believe it was water they saw, it was so long since there had been rain.

They ran straightway, therefore, to the camp of Israel, and entered it pell-mell, eager for gain; but suddenly the Israelites rose up on every hand and smote them, so that they fled back to the camp even more quickly than they had come. And the three kings pursued, and when the king of Moab saw that the battle was too sore for him, he took with him his seven hundred men that drew sword and tried to beat through unto the king of Edom; but they could not. Then the Israelites went through the land,

stopping all the fountains of water and felling all the good trees, until the king of Moab was glad to promise anything in order to secure their departure, and they returned triumphant to their separate homes.

Elisha, too, went on his way, and many are the strange tales that are told of him at this period. There was one miracle he worked for the wife of one of the lesser prophets who came to him for help, saying:

"Thy servant my husband is dead: and thou knowest that he did fear the Lord: and the creditor is come to take unto him my two children to be bondsmen."

This was according to a cruel law of those times, by which, if a man died without means to pay his debts, his children became the property of the man to whom he owed the money.

Elisha said to the poor woman:

"What shall I do for thee? Tell me, what hast thou in the house?"

And she replied:

"Thine handmaid hath not anything in the house, save a pot of oil."

Then he said:

"Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbors, even empty vessels; borrow not a few. And go in and shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and pour out into all these vessels; and set aside that which is full."

So she went from him and did as he had said; and when she and her sons had closed the doors and started to fill the vessels with oil, behold, there was enough to fill them every one. And she said to her son:

"Bring me yet a vessel."

And he answered:

"There is not a vessel more."

And still they had oil. Then she came and told Elisha of it, and he said to her:

"Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live, thou and thy sons, on the rest."

Another miracle he worked in the behalf of a woman of Shunem. She had a great regard for Elisha, and as she was a person of much importance, as often as he came to Shunem she would invite him to her house to eat bread, and at last she said to her husband:

"Behold now, I perceive that this is an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually. Let us make, I pray thee, a little room with walls; and let us set for him there a bed and a table and a stool and a candlestick: and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither."

And as her husband approved of this kind plan, the good lady had all in readiness for Elisha when next he came to their neighborhood, and he accepted her hospitality and slept there a night in the room she had prepared for him. When he woke next morning he told his servant Gehazi to call the Shunemite to him, and when she came and stood before him, he said to her very gently:

"Behold, thou hast been careful for us with all this care; what is to be done for thee? Wouldst thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host?"

And she answered:

"I dwell among mine own people."

Then Elisha consulted with Gehazi, saying:

"What then is to be done for her?"

And Gehazi answered doubtfully:

"Verily, she hath no son, and her husband is old."

Then Elisha knew what would please the woman, and he called her back again, and said to her:

"At this season, when the time cometh round, thou shalt embrace a son."

And she could not believe him.

"Nay, my lord, thou man of God," she said, "do not lie unto thine handmaid."

But Elisha had spoken only the truth, for in the spring, as he had said, a little son was born to her, and the woman was happier than ever before in her life. And as the year went on, the child grew in health and strength, until he was able to go with his father to the field. And it fell on a day that he went out with his father to superintend the reapers at their work, and the hot sun beat down on the child and made him faint. But he said nothing, until suddenly the sickness overcame him, and he called out to his father:

"My head; my head;" and fell to the ground unconscious.

And his father ran to help him, and said to his servant:

"Carry him to his mother."

And the servant brought him in and laid him on his mother's knees, and there at noon he died. And she had him carried up to the room that she had prepared for Elisha, and shut the door on him, and went out and sought her husband, saying:

"Send me, I pray thee, one of the servants, and one of the asses, that I may run to the man of God, and come again."

All this time she had not shed a tear nor uttered a word of sorrow, and her husband looked at her in astonishment.

"Wherefore wilt thou go to him to-day?" he asked.

But she answered only:

"It shall be well."

And with that he was obliged to let her go. Then she said to her servant:

"Drive, and go forward; slacken me not the riding, except I bid thee."

And they went as fast as their mules could carry them to Mount Carmel, where Elisha dwelt. And it came to pass that when the man of God saw her afar off he said to Gehazi his servant:

"Behold, yonder is the Shunemite: run, I pray thee, now, to meet her, and say unto her, 'Is it well with thee? Is it well with thy husband? Is it well with thy child?'"

And she answered Gehazi calmly:

"It is well," and went straight on to where Elisha stood. There she fell on the ground and caught hold of his feet, in her agony of supplication. Gehazi came near to thrust her away, in anger at her familiarity, but the man of God said:

"Let her alone: for her soul is vexed within her; and the Lord hath hid it from me, and hath not told me."

And at last the poor mother found her voice, and said piteously:

"Did I desire a son of my lord? Did I not say, 'Do not deceive me'?"

She could speak no further, but Elisha understood by those few words what had happened. He turned to Gehazi and said to him:

"Make haste, take my staff in thy hand, and go thy way: if thou meet any man, salute him not; or if any salute thee, answer him not again: and lay my staff upon the face of the child."

But the mother of the child believed in none but Elisha, and she said:

"As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee."

And he arose and started with her for her house. However, Gehazi went on before them, and laid the staff upon the face of the child; but there was neither voice nor

hearing, wherefore he returned to meet his master, and told him, saying:

"The child is not awakened."

And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead and laid upon his bed; and Elisha went in alone unto him, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the Lord. And he went up and stretched himself upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands; and the flesh of the child waxed warm. Then he went out and walked in the house once to and fro; and went up again and embraced the child; and at that the child opened his eyes and sneezed seven times. And Elisha cried to Gehazi:

"Call the Shunemite."

And when she was come into the room he said to her:

"Take up thy son."

But before even she turned to her son, she fell on her knees on the ground before Elisha, who had given her a second time her child. Then she took up her son, and went out.

Now, Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master and honorable; he was also a mighty man of valor; but he was a leper. And the Syrians had gone out in bands, and had brought away among their captives out of Israel a little maid; and she waited on Naaman's wife.

And she said unto her mistress:

"Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! Then would he recover him of his leprosy!"

And some one told the king of Syria, saying:

"Thus and thus said the maid that is of the land of Israel."

And the king said (it was our old friend, Ben-hadad):

"Go to, go; and I will send a letter unto the king of Israel."

And he sent Naaman to Samaria with ten talents of silver and six thousand pieces of gold and ten changes of raiment, and a letter to the king, saying:

"Behold, I have sent Naaman, my servant, to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy."

And it came to pass when the king of Israel had read the letter that he rent his clothes in vexation, and said:

"Am I a god, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? But consider, I pray you, he doth but seek a quarrel against me."

And it was so that when Elisha heard of the king's trouble, he sent to him, saying:

"Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? Let Naaman come now to me and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel."

So the king gladly passed Naaman on to Elisha, and he came with his horses and his chariots, and stood at the door of Elisha's house; and Elisha sent a message unto him, saying:

"Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean."

But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said:

"Behold, I thought, 'He will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place, and recover the leper.' Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them and be clean?"

And he turned and went away in a rage. But his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said:

"My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great

thing, wouldest thou not have done it? How much rather, then, when he saith unto thee, 'Wash and be clean'?"

And Naaman listened to their words. Then he went down and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

And he returned to Elisha, he and all his company, and came and stood before him. And Naaman said:

"Behold, now I know that there is no god in all the earth, but in Israel; now, therefore, I pray thee, take a present from thy servant."

But Elisha said:

"As the Lord liveth, before whom I stand, I will take none."

And he urged him to take it, but he refused; so Naaman departed from him a little way.

But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, said to himself: "Behold, my master hath spared this Naaman the Syrian, in not receiving at his hands that which he brought: as the Lord liveth, I will run after him and take somewhat of him."

So Gehazi followed Naaman, and when Naaman saw some one running after him, he lighted down from his chariot to meet him, and said:

"Is all well?"

And Gehazi answered:

"All is well. My master hath sent me saying, 'Behold, even now there be come to me from the hill country of Ephraim, two young men of the sons of the prophets: give them, I pray thee, a talent of silver and two changes of raiment'."

And Naaman said gladly:

"Be content, take two talents."

And Gehazi bound the two talents of silver in two bags

with the two changes of raiment, and laid them upon two of his servants; and they bare them before him. But when they came to the hill he let the men go back, and bestowed the goods in his own house. And he went in and stood before his master, and Elisha asked:

"Whence comest thou, Gehazi?"

And he answered:

"Thy servant went no whither."

Then Elisha said in a terrible voice:

"Was not mine heart with thee when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee? Is it a time to receive money and to receive garments, and oliveyards and vineyards, and sheep and oxen, and menservants and maidservants? The leprosy of Naaman shall cleave unto thee."

And Gehazi went out from his presence a leper as white as snow.

Soon after this the king of Syria began one of his perpetual wars against Israel; and he took counsel with his servants, saying:

"In such and such a place shall be my camp."

But his intention was revealed to Elisha, and he sent word to the king of Israel, saying:

"Beware that thou pass not such a place, for there the Syrians are coming down."

And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God warned him of, and saved himself not once or twice, but many times. And the king of Syria was sore troubled for this thing; and he thought that one of his own servants must have betrayed him. But when he sent for them all and asked:

"Will ye not shew me which of us is for the king of Israel?"

They answered:

"Nay, my lord, O King, but Elisha the prophet telleth

the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber."

And at that the king said:

"Go and see where he is, that I may send and fetch him."

And they answered:

"Behold, he is in Dothan."

Therefore sent the king thither horses and chariots and a great host, and they came by night, and compassed the city about, and when Elisha's servant was risen early, he saw them, and ran to his master with the news, saying:

"Alas, my master! How shall we do?"

But Elisha answered calmly:

"Fear not; for they that be with us are more than they that be with them."

And as the man did not understand him, Elisha prayed:

"Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes that he may see;" and at that the young man looked up and saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha. But only he and Elisha could see them. Then Elisha went down to the Syrian camp, and as he went he smote them with blindness, and when they were confused and bewildered he came to them and said:

"This is not the way, neither is this the city. Follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom ye seek."

And they did not know Elisha, and he led them all away unto Samaria. And when they were come into Samaria he took the blindness off them, and behold, they were in the midst of the enemy's city. And the king of Israel said unto Elisha when he saw them:

"My father, shall I smite them; shall I smite them?"

But he answered:

"Thou shalt not smite them: wouldest thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword and with thy

bow? Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master."

And the king prepared great provision for them; and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master, and told him all that had befallen them. And the bands of Syria came no more into Israel.

Some time after this Elisha had occasion to go to Damascus, the great city of Syria, and when he reached there he found Ben-hadad, the king, fallen sick. When Ben-hadad heard that Elisha was come to his city, he said to Hazael, his chief minister:

"Take a present in thine hand, and go meet the man of God, and inquire of the Lord by him, saying, 'Shall I recover of this sickness?' "

So Hazael went and took a present with him of every good thing in Damascus, forty camels' burden, and stood before Elisha and said:

"Thy son, Ben-hadad, king of Syria, hath sent me to thee, saying, 'Shall I recover of this sickness?' "

And Elisha answered:

"Go say unto him, 'Thou shalt not recover,' for the Lord hath shewed me that he shall surely die."

And as he spoke he settled his countenance steadfastly upon Hazael, until Hazael was ashamed and could not return his gaze; and Elisha wept.

"Why weepeth my lord?" asked Hazael.

And Elisha answered:

"Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the Children of Israel: their strongholds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword."

"But," said Hazael, "what is thy servant, which is but a dog, that he should do this great thing?"

And Elisha answered:

"The Lord hath shewed me that thou shalt be king over Syria."

Then Hazael departed, and went to Ben-hadad, who asked:

"What said Elisha to thee?"

And he dared not tell the truth to his master, but answered:

"He told me that thou shouldest surely recover."

But it came to pass on the next day that Ben-hadad made away with his own life, for he took his coverlet and dipped it in water and spread it on his face, so that he died. And, as Elisha had predicted, Hazael was made king in his stead.

Meanwhile, Jehoram of Jerusalem, the one that married the daughter of Ahab, had died, and Ahaziah, his son, had become king in his place; and when Ben-hadad died he made an alliance with his uncle Jehoram, king of Israel, and went to war at Ramoth-Gilead against Hazael, the new king of Syria. We are not told how this particular war ended, but we know that Jehoram was wounded in battle and returned to Jezreel to be healed, and Ahaziah went down there to visit him while he was ill.

While the two kings were there together, and unmindful for the time of their state affairs, a great trouble was brewing for them, under the direction of Elisha the prophet. I do not know whether Elisha tried deliberately to bring on a revolution in Israel, or whether he only saw clearly in one of his trances the events of the future; but in either case he called one of the sons of the prophets and said to him:

"Make haste, and take this vial of oil in thine hand, and go to Ramoth-Gilead; and when thou comest thither, look out there Jehu, the son of Nimshi, and go in and make him arise up from among his brethren, and carry him to an

inner chamber. Then take the vial of oil and pour it on his head, and anoint him king over Israel. Then open the door and flee and tarry not."

So the young man went to Ramoth-Gilead, and when he came, behold, the captains of the host were sitting together, and he said:

"I have an errand to thee, O captain."

And Jehu said:

"Unto which of all of us?"

And he said:

"To thee, O captain."

Then Jehu arose and went with him into the house, and the prophet poured the oil on his head and said:

"I have anointed thee king over the people of the Lord, even over Israel."

And he opened the door and fled.

When Jehu came forth to the other soldiers, one among them said:

"Is all well? Wherefore came this mad fellow to thee?"

And he answered:

"Ye know the man and what his talk was."

But they said:

"It is false; tell us now."

And he told them the prophet's words. And when they heard them the soldiers took every man his garment and put it under Jehu on the bare steps, to do him honor, and they blew the trumpet, proclaiming:

"Jehu is king."

So Jehu conspired against the king, who was at Jezreel, while Jehu, with the army, kept Ramoth-Gilead against the Syrians.

And Jehu said to his men:

"If this be your mind (that I be king), then let none

escape and go forth out of the city, to go and tell it in Jezreel."

And he himself rode in his chariot to Jezreel, as fast as he could go. Now, the watchman who stood on the tower of Jezreel spied Jehu and his men as they came, and he said:

"I see a company."

And King Jehoram said:

"Take an horseman and send to meet them, and let him say, 'Is it peace?' "

So there went one on horseback to meet Jehu, and said:

"Thus saith the king, 'Is it peace?' (or, "Is all well?").

And Jehu answered:

"What hast thou to do with peace? Turn thou behind me."

And the watchman in Jezreel called:

"The messenger came to them, but he cometh not again."

Then the king sent out a second horseman, and he met Jehu and asked, like the first:

"Is it peace?"

And again the answer was:

"What hast thou to do with peace? Turn thou behind me."

And the watchman called once more:

"He came even unto them, and cometh not again: and the driving is like the driving of Jehu, the son of Nimshi, for he driveth furiously."

Then said Jehoram, "Yoke," and they made ready the chariots, and he went out with Ahaziah, each in his chariot, to meet Jehu, and as it happened they encountered one another in the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.

And Jehoram said:

"Is it peace, Jehu?"

And Jehu cried:

"What peace, so long as the wickedness of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?"

And Jehoram, seeing that Jehu had all the army at his back, turned to fly, crying to his nephew:

"There is treachery, O Ahaziah."

But before he could escape, Jehu drew his bow with his full strength, and smote him between the arms, and the arrow went out at his heart, and he sank down in his chariot. Then said Jehu to Bidkar, his captain:

"Take up and cast him in the field of Naboth the Jezreelite, for remember that I and thou rode together after Ahab his father."

Ahaziah meanwhile fled by the way of the garden houses, but Jehu called to his men to follow him and smite him in his chariot, and they came up with him at the ascent of Gur, which is by Ibleam, and there wounded him mortally, though he had the strength to keep on to Megiddo, where he died among friends. From there his servants carried his body in a chariot to Jerusalem, and buried him in his sepulchre with his fathers in the city of David.

Now, old Queen Jezebel had been in Jezreel taking care of the king, her son, and had witnessed all the deeds of Jehu on the fatal day. She knew that death was all she had to expect, but at least she had the virtue of courage, and now she painted her eyes and tired her head, as if for a feast, and sat looking out of her window, as Jehu entered in at the gate. And as he came she screamed:

"Is it peace, thou Zimri, thy master's murderer?"

And he lifted up his face and saw her standing there, and behind her three of her servants, officers of the palace. And he called to them:

"Throw her down."

And they dared not disobey, so they threw her down on

the stones, and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall and on the horses; and Jehu in his chariot trod her under foot. Then he went on into the palace, and when he was come in he did eat and drink; and he said when he was satisfied:

"See now to this cursed woman and bury her; for she is a king's daughter."

And his servants went to bury Jezebel, but they found that the dogs had eaten her flesh, even as Elijah had foretold many years before. So perished the woman whose name stands only for wickedness!

Jehu's reign was one of terror. He shed the blood of his subjects right and left. There were seventy sons and grandsons of Ahab living when he took possession of the throne, but he bribed their servants to kill them all and to bring their heads in baskets, and he had the heads piled in two heaps at the gate of Jezreel, to strike fear into the heart of all who beheld them.

Then he met the brethren of Ahaziah on their way to Jerusalem, and he murdered all of them, even forty and two innocent men; and from the scene of this slaughter, he and his great friend, Jehonadab, the son of Rechab, went to assemble together the priests of Baal, on the pretense of holding a high feast.

"Sanctify a solemn assembly for Baal," Jehu said to the priests; and they proclaimed it. And when all the worshipers of Baal were come, so that there was not a man left out, Jehu said to the guard and to the captains:

"Go in and slay them; let none come forth."

And the soldiers went in and killed them all with the edge of the sword, and brought forth the obelisks that were in the house of Baal and burned them, and broke down the house itself and made it a draught-house unto this day.

Jehu's punishment, which was not half as great as he

deserved, came from the hand of Hazael, the king of Syria, who, as Elisha had foretold, began in these days to cut Israel short and smite the Israelites in all the coasts from Jordan eastward, all the land of Gilead, the Gadites, the Reubenites, and the Manassites, from Aroer, which is by the valley of Arnon, even Gilead and Bashan.

In the midst of these wars the bloody Jehu died, and Jehoahaz, his son, succeeded him on the throne.

Now we must see how matters went in Judah after Ahaziah's death. His mother, Athaliah, seems to have been a worthy daughter of Jezebel, for when the news came of Ahaziah's death, all she thought of was to get the kingdom into her own hands, and to do this securely she murdered all the children royal, even her own grandchildren. But Jehosheba, the sister of Ahaziah and wife of the high priest Jehoiada, took Joash, one of Ahaziah's sons, and stole him away from the others that were slain, even him and his nurse, and hid them from Athaliah, so that his life was saved; and Jehosheba kept him in concealment for six years, while the wicked queen ruled over the land. And in the seventh year the high priest Jehoiada sent and fetched the captains over hundreds, and the Carites (or executioners) and the guards, and brought them to him into the house of the Lord; and he made a covenant with them there, and took their oath, and then showed them the king's son. Then he directed them what they should do, and on a certain day, being sure of the army, Jehoiada brought out the king's son before all the people, and put the crown upon him, and told the people how he had been saved; and they made him king then and there, and anointed him and clapped their hands, crying:

"God save the king!"

for they were heartily tired of Athaliah and her crimes.

As for Queen Athaliah, when she heard the noise of the

guard and of the people, she came into the house of the Lord; and she looked, and behold, the little king stood on the platform, as the manner was, and the captains and the trumpets by the king; and all the people of the land rejoicing and blowing with trumpets. Then Athaliah rent her clothes and cried:

"Treason, treason!"

But Jehoiada commanded the captains and said unto them:

"Have her forth between the ranks; and him that followeth slay with the sword."

And all the people made way for her, and she went by the way of the horses' entry to the king's house, and there she was slain.

Joash grew up to be a good and pious king, and being under Jehoiada's, the high priest's, influence, he occupied himself chiefly with reforms in the service of the Temple. He had to take away all the hallowed things out of the Temple, at one time, however, and all the gold that was found in the treasures of the house of the Lord and of the king's house, and send it to Hazael, king of Syria, to buy him off from destroying Jerusalem, for Hazael was a scourge to all the Children of Israel, both in Judah and in Samaria.

Joash died a violent death, as did so many in those troublous times. He fell a victim to the malice of two of his servants, and his son Amaziah took his place as king, but that was long after Elisha's day.

In the northern kingdom Jehu's son Jehoahaz had all he could do to defend himself from Hazael and his Syrians, for Hazael left him only ten chariots of war and ten thousand footmen, and made the Israelites like the dust trampled on in threshing, but he managed to bequeath a kingdom still to his son Joash, and it was during his reign that Elisha died.

When the old prophet fell sick of the sickness whereof he died, word was brought of it to the king of Israel, and Joash came down unto him and wept over him, and said, remembering Elijah's summons of death:

"My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horses thereof."

Then said Elisha to the king:

"Take bow and arrows:" and when he had taken them he said:

"Put thine hand upon the bow."

And he put his hand upon it. Then Elisha laid his hands upon the king's head, and said:

"Open the window eastward."

And when it was opened he bade him shoot. And Elisha said:

"The Lord's arrow of victory, even the arrow of victory over Syria: for thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek, till thou have consumed them."

And he bade Joash smite upon the ground with the arrows, and he smote three times and stayed. Then was Elisha wroth with him.

"Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times," he cried feebly, "then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it: whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice."

And with these words the prophet died.

CHAPTER XXX

ASSYRIA AND BABYLON

We are coming now to the sad part of the story of Israel, her humiliation and downfall under the oppression of a power up to this time almost unknown to her. She had fought successfully the Egyptians and the Philistines, and the host of smaller neighboring nations that had dared raise hand against her; but the time came when she lay crushed under the wheels of the Babylonian chariots, and let fall forever her claim to existence as a nation.

The Assyrians, of whom we are to hear so much henceforth, were no new people. I have not time nor knowledge to explain to you the rise and fall of successive powers on the banks of the Tigris and the Euphrates, but you can remember that Chaldea and Assyria and Babylonia were but different names for one continuous civilization. Chaldea was the oldest nation, and the one to whom we owe the most. Abraham, you know, started on his travels from Ur of the Chaldees. They were astronomers and astrologers before anything else; men of culture, might and glory; but the time of their highest prosperity as a nation is lost in the shadows of antiquity. We know about them mainly through their intercourse with Assyria, the second great empire of the land. Assyria and Babylonia existed as rival kingdoms side by side for many years; Assyria, on the banks of the Tigris, with Nineveh for its capital; and Babylonia on the Euphrates, with the city of Babylon for its seat of government. Tiglath-pileser,

Shalmaneser, Sennacherib and Assha-bani-pal were Assyrian kings, and gained for Assyria a decided preponderance of power over Babylon.

But about the time of Josiah, the Medes and Babylonians combined together against Assyria, overthrew the empire and destroyed Nineveh.

Then came the short day of the glory of Babylon, when her king, Nebuchadnezzar, conquered far and wide, and led the Children of Israel away captive at their chariot wheels.

But a new power was rising in the mountains of the East, and three years after Nebuchadnezzar's death the Medes and Persians, sturdy mountaineers, came down with Cyrus at their head and commenced a twenty years' war, which resulted in the utter downfall of Babylon. Then the empire passed into the hands of Cyrus. The "Darius the Mede," of whom Daniel speaks, was only his viceroy.

It was Cyrus who brought the captivity to an end and allowed the Hebrews to return to their own land. These explanations are tiresome, I know, but they are necessary for a clear understanding of the last of our stories.

The kings who succeeded each other in both Israel and Judah after Elisha's death can be passed over with very little notice, until we come to the reign of Hezekiah of Judah.

Amaziah, son of Joash, king of Judah, was chiefly distinguished for a victory over the Edomites in the Valley of Salt, and for a defeat that he sustained at the hands of Jehoash, king of Israel. This king's success in Edom turned his head, apparently, for he sent a declaration of war to his peaceable neighbors in Israel, saying:

"Come, let us look one another in the face."

Jehoash had no wish to fight.

"Thou hast indeed smitten Edom," he said to Amaziah,

"and thine heart hath lifted thee up: glory thereof, and abide at home; for why shouldest thou meddle to thy hurt, that thou shouldest fall, even thou and Judah with thee?"

But Amaziah would not hear. So Jehoash, king of Israel, went up; and he and Amaziah looked one another in the face at Bethshemesh, which belongs to Judah, and Judah was put to the worse before Israel, and fled away every man to his tent. And Jehoash took Amaziah prisoner, and marched on Jerusalem, and broke down the wall of Jerusalem from the gate of Ephraim unto the corner gate, and took all the gold and silver and all the vessels that were found in the house of the Lord and in the treasures of the king's house, the hostages also, and returned to Samaria with the spoils.

Amaziah was finally slain in Lachish, whither he had fled to escape a conspiracy at home. His son Azariah came to the throne at the age of sixteen. You will remember this poor king because he was a leper, and had to live in a house set apart from other men. He seems to have been a good ruler, and he built towers in Jerusalem and fortified the walls, and built towers in the wilderness, and hewed out many cisterns, for he had much cattle, and he had husbandmen and vineyard-dressers in the mountains and in the fruitful fields; for he loved husbandry. And his name spread far abroad.

In Israel the house of Jehu was brought to an end by the murder of King Zechariah. His assassin, Shallum, the son of Jabesh, succeeded to the throne, but only reigned one month. Then he was put to death in his turn, by Menahem, the son of Gadi, who reigned ten years; and it is during Menahem's reign that we first find mention of Assyria. We are told of Menahem's exacting money of Israel, even of all the mighty men of Israel, to give to Pul, the king of Assyria, as an inducement to the

great king to confirm Menahem on his little throne and leave his land in peace. After Menahem's death, his son, Pekahiah, reigned for two years, and was then quietly killed by Pekah, the son of Remaliah, who wanted the throne for himself.

During Pekah's reign we again hear ominous murmurings of Assyria. Tiglath-pileser, the king, came to Israel and took Ijon and Abel-beth-maacah and Janoah and Kedesh and Hazor and Gilead and Galilee and all the land of Naphtali, and carried the inhabitants away captive.

Ahaz was at this time king over Judah, and at his call the Assyrians came back into the land to help him against his enemies, for Rezin, king of Syria, made an alliance with Pehah and marched against Jerusalem; and they besieged Ahaz, but could not overcome him. However, they pressed him sore, and he sent messages to Tiglath-pileser, saying:

"I am thy servant and thy son: come up and save me out of the hand of the king of Syria and out of the hand of the king of Israel which rise up against me."

And as a further inducement to the Assyrian king he took the silver and gold that was found in the Temple and the palace, and sent it to him for a present. And Tiglath-pileser hearkened unto Ahaz, and went up against Damascus, the capital of Syria, and took it and carried away the people captive after he had killed Rezin, their king. Then he established his court in Damascus, and Ahaz went up to see him there, and made him a long visit. And he so admired the fashion of an altar which he saw in Damascus that he sent the pattern of it home to his own high priest, Urijah, and had one made exactly like it for the Temple.

During the reign of Ahaz, Pekah, the king of Israel,

died, not by peaceful causes, of course, but by violence. Hoshea, the son of Elah, conspired against him and killed him, and himself mounted the bloody throne of Israel. Soon after Ahaz died in Jerusalem, and was succeeded by his son Hezekiah, so now we have Hezekiah reigning in Judah and Hoshea in Israel.

Hoshea was the last of the kings of the north. Against him came up Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, and Hoshea became his servant, and brought him presents, and was outwardly all submission, but in secret he conspired against the Assyrians, and sent messengers to So, king of Egypt, begging him to come to the aid of Israel. Unfortunately, So did not answer this entreaty, and the letters fell into Shalmaneser's hands, whereupon Shalmaneser bound Hoshea in prison and shut him up, while he and his soldiers went up to Samaria and besieged it three years. At the end of that time the city fell, and the Assyrians found themselves masters of the whole country.

They made a cruel use of their power, for they carried all Israel away unto Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor, on the River Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes, and to re-people their cities the king of Assyria brought men of his own subjects from Babylon and Cuthah and Ava and Hamath and Sepharvaim; and they possessed Samaria and dwelt in the cities thereof. What became of the poor Israelites in that foreign land we do not know. When their brethren of Judah were carried away captive in their turn a hundred and fifty years later, they could find no traces in Assyria of the descendants of Hoshea's subjects. They passed forever out of history when they crossed the Assyrian border, and are known to us only as "The Lost Tribes." Perhaps they were all massacred on the long march to their new home. Perhaps they were separated and scattered throughout the great Assyrian

kingdom, until in their loneliness they married the sons and daughters of their enemies, took up their mode of life, and left no record to tell their children of the land whence they had come. Perhaps they wandered away into the unclaimed territories of the wild lands that we know as Russia and Europe. It has even been suggested that they made their way up through Siberia and across the Behring Strait and down by way of Alaska to America, where, under the influences of a new climate and entire absence of civilization, their children and grandchildren took on the aspect of a new race and became the parents of our red Indians. It is all guesswork, whatever we decide, but the question never ceases to be interesting.

Judah also was very nearly crushed under the Assyrian heel at this time, and she was only saved by the wisdom of her king, Hezekiah, and the zeal of his prophet and servant Isaiah. Hezekiah was only twenty-five when he began to reign. He was king for thirty-nine years, and he trusted in the Lord, so that after him was never like him among all the kings of Judah. He clave to the Lord, he departed not from following Him, but kept His commandments which the Lord commanded Moses.

His chief adviser was Isaiah, a prophet, a truly holy man and an intense patriot.

In the fourteenth year of Hezekiah's reign another Assyrian king, called Sennacherib, invaded the land of Judah with all his forces, and Hezekiah, to propitiate him, sent him a humble message, saying:

"I have offended: return from me: that which thou puttest on us I will bear;" and in order to satisfy the Assyrians' demands he was obliged not only to give them all the money in his treasury, but also to cut off the gold from the doors of the Temple. Even this only contented them for a short time, and soon Sennacherib was sending a

second army, commanded by his officers, to besiege the city. This is the famous siege of Jerusalem.

The Assyrians entrenched themselves in their camp, and then sent ambassadors to demand an interview with Hezekiah. He sent out to them Eliakim, who was over his household, and Shebnah, his secretary, and Joah, his chronicler, and they met the foreign envoys by the conduit of the upper pool, which is in the highway of the fuller's field. And Rabshakeh, the Assyrian, said:

"Say ye now to Hezekiah, 'Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence is this in which thou trustest? Thou sayest, but they are but vain words, There is counsel and strength for the war. Now, on whom dost thou trust that thou hast rebelled against me? Now, behold, thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed, even upon Egypt; whereon if a man lean it will go into his hand and pierce it; so is Pharaoh, king of Egypt, unto all that trust in him.'"

And Rabshakeh went on warning the Israelites against Egypt and vaunting the kingdom of Assyria, untill Hezekiah's ambassadors said hastily:

"Speak, I pray thee, to thy servants in the Syrian language, for we understand it: and speak not with us in the Jews' language, in the ears of the people that are on the wall."

For the ignorant portion of the inhabitants who stood listening were becoming manifestly affected by the plausible words of the Assyrian. This, however, was the effect which the ambassadors wished to produce, and Rabshakeh answered, in the same tongue:

"Hath my master sent me to thy master and to thee to speak these words? Hath he not sent me to the men which sit on the wall?"

And he turned and cried with a loud voice in the Jews' language, and spake, saying:

"Hear ye the word of the great king, the king of Assyria. Thus saith the king, 'Let not Hezekiah deceive you; for he shall not be able to deliver you out of his hand: neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the Lord, saying, The Lord shall surely deliver us, and this city shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria. Hearken not to Hezekiah: for thus saith the king of Assyria. Make your peace with me and come out to me; and eat ye every one of his vine and every one of his fig-tree; and drink ye every man the waters of his own cistern; until I come and take you away unto a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of olive oil and of honey, that ye may live and not die: and hearken not unto Hezekiah, when he persuadeth you, saying, The Lord shall deliver us. Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, of Hena and of Ivah? Have they delivered Samaria out of my hand?' "

Here he paused. But the people held their peace and answered him not a word, for the king's commandment was: "Answer him not." Howbeit, their hearts were troubled at his saying.

Then came Eliakim and Shebnah and Joah to Hezekiah with their clothes rent, and told him the words of Rabshakeh, and when King Hezekiah heard it, he rent his clothes and covered himself with sackcloth and went into the house of the Lord. And he sent Eliakim and Shebnah and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, unto Isaiah, the prophet, to say:

"Thus saith Hezekiah: 'This day is a day of trouble and rebuke and contumely: wherefore lift up thy prayer for the remnant that is left.' "

For what was the little city of Jerusalem to hold out against Assyria, especially if threatened by doubt and possible treachery within her own walls?

But Isaiah answered the king's servants:

"Thus shall ye say to your master: 'Thus saith the Lord, Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard. Behold, I will put a spirit in the servants of the king of Syria, and they shall hear a rumor, and shall return to fall by the sword in their own land.' "

Thus fortified, Hezekiah held out against the enemy, though the hardship of the siege was very great. The people were kept busy repairing and fortifying the walls of the city, and the citadel which was called Millo, and in making weapons and shields in abundance. And Hezekiah took counsel with his princes and his mighty men to stop the water of the fountains which were without the city, and the brook that flowed through the midst of the land; for they said:

"Why should the kings of Assyria come and find much water?"

And he set captains of war over his people, and gathered them together to him in the broad place at the gate of the city, and spake comfortably unto them, saying:

"Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: for there is a greater with us than with him: with him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles."

And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah.

And Hezekiah the king and Isaiah the prophet prayed and cried to heaven. And the Lord sent an angel, which cut off the mighty men of valor and the leaders and captains in the camp of the kingdom of Assyria. So he

returned with shame of face to his own land, and when he was come into the house of his gods his own sons slew him there with the sword. Thus the Lord saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, and from the hand of all others, and guided them on every side.

And many brought gifts unto the Lord to Jerusalem, and precious things to Hezekiah, king of Judah; so that he was exalted in the sight of all nations from henceforth, and he had exceeding much riches and honor; and he provided himself treasuries for silver and for gold, and for precious stones and for spices, and for shields, and for all manner of goodly vessels; storehouses also for the increase of corn and wine and oil; and stalls for all manner of beasts and flocks in folds. Moreover, he provided cities, and possessions of flocks and herds in abundance; for God had given him very much substance. This same Hezekiah also stopped the upper spring of the waters of Gihon, and brought them straight down on the west side of the city of David. And he prospered in all his works.

I have not time to tell you of all the reformations he made in the service of the Temple, but since the time of Solomon the son of David there was not the like in Jerusalem. He revived the old feast of the Passover, which was falling into disuse, and infused into it new life and meaning; and in every work that he began in the service of the house of the Lord, and in the law and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart. He made Jerusalem a centre of literary culture also. Most of the stories we have been reading were written in his day, and it is even thought that the great poem of Job was written by one of his court.

Isaiah was his teacher and friend through all, though he

predicted sadly that evil would befall the house of Hezekiah after his death. Long after the siege of the city, another king of Assyria, Berodach-baladan by name, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah, for he had heard that he had been very ill. And Hezekiah received the messengers with great kindness, and shewed them all the house of his precious things, the silver and the gold and the spices and the precious oil, and the house of his jewels and all that was found in his treasuries; there was nothing in his house nor in all his dominions that Hezekiah shewed them not. Isaiah in his wisdom knew that the sight of Hezekiah's treasuries would excite the greed of the Babylonians, and he was angry with Hezekiah.

"What said these men, and whence came they unto thee?" he asked Hezekiah.

And the king answered, well satisfied:

"They are come from a far country, even from Babylon."

And Isaiah said:

"What have they seen in thy house?"

"All that is in mine house have they seen," replied the king, "there is nothing that is among my treasures that I have not shewed them."

Then said Isaiah solemnly:

"Hear the word of the Lord: Behold the days come that all that is in thine house and that which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the Lord. And of thy sons shall they take away, and they shall be servants in the palace of the king of Babylon."

And Hezekiah could only say:

"Good is the word of the Lord."

And Hezekiah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the ascent of the sepulchre of the sons of David,

and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem did him honor at his death.

After Hezekiah came Manasseh his son, who was in every way a contrast to his father, and during his long reign of fifty-five years undid his work as far as in his power lay. Amon his son succeeded him, and was likewise a wretched king. His wickedness finally became so notorious that a conspiracy was formed against him to put him to death and make his son Josiah king in his stead.

Josiah proved almost as good and famous a king as his great-grandfather. Like him also, he had a prophet for adviser and friend to sustain him in high thoughts and noble deeds. He was called Jeremiah. Josiah was deeply religious and occupied himself more with priestly affairs than with war. During some alterations or repairs which he had commanded in the Temple, the workmen discovered an old book of the Law of Moses. It had been hidden away and forgotten for nobody knew how many years, and is the book we know as Deuteronomy. They carried it to the king, and the king gathered all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem and the inhabitants of the city and the priests and the Levites, and all the people, both great and small; and went up to the house of the Lord. And there he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that had been found. And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep his testimonies and his statutes with all his heart and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant that were written in this book. And he caused all that were found in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand to it also. And they did according to the covenant of God, the Lord of their fathers.

After all this, when Josiah had prepared the Temple and put it in fresh order, Neco, king of Egypt, went up to

fight against Carchemish, king of Assyria, by the River Euphrates; and Josiah went out against Neco as he was marching through his kingdom. But Neco sent ambassadors to him, saying:

"What have I to do with thee, thou king of Judah? I came not against thee this day, but against the house wherewith I have war: and God hath commanded me to make haste: forbear thou from meddling with God, who is with me, that he destroy thee not."

Nevertheless, Josiah would not listen to this fair warning, nor turn his face from Neco, but disguised himself that he might fight with him in the valley of Megiddo. And the archers shot at King Josiah, and he said to his servants:

"Have me away, for I am sore wounded."

So his servants took him out of the chariot, and put him in the second chariot that he had, and brought him to Jerusalem. And he died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his fathers. And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah, and all the singing men and singing women spake of him in their lamentations; and they made them an ordinance in Israel.

Josiah was the last king of Judah in anything but name. His four successors were little more than figure-heads tolerated by the lazy Assyrian powers, and alternately tormented and protected by Egypt. Jehoahaz, Josiah's son, reigned only three months, and then fell into the hands of Pharaoh-Neco, who carried him off a prisoner to Egypt, and put the land of Judah to a tribute of an hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold. Neco made another of Josiah's sons king, who held his throne only as a puppet of the king of Egypt. Even his name he changed at his master's orders, from Eliakim becoming Jehoiakim, and he exacted the silver and gold of the people of Judah in

perpetual taxation, to give it unto Pharaoh-Neco. This went on for eleven years, but there were other and worse troubles that Judah dated from his reign, for hardly had the monstrous demands of the king of Egypt been satisfied than Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, descended from the north. He took from the border of Egypt unto the River Euphrates all that pertained to the king of Egypt, and made Jehoiakim his servant for three years. Jehoiakim at last rebelled against him, but during the rest of his reign he was harassed by bands of Chaldeans and Syrians who came up and overran the land.

And when the Moabites and Children of Ammon saw their once-powerful neighbor Judah, weak and defenseless, they likewise crossed her border and destroyed all that the Egyptians and Assyrians had left.

Still the shadow of a government continued, and when Jehoiakim died, his son Jehoiachin ascended the throne with the usual solemnities. He was very young when his father died; one chronicle tells us he was eighteen, while another asserts he was but eight. In either case he fell an easy victim to the servants of Nebuchadnezzar, who came up at the beginning of his reign to besiege Jerusalem. So helpless and hopeless was he that when Nebuchadnezzar himself arrived in front of the city, he, and his family and his princes and his officers and his servants, went out and surrendered themselves to the king of Babylon. Of course, Jerusalem fell into the enemy's hands, and they carried out thence all the treasures of the house of the Lord and of the king's house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold which Solomon had made in the Temple. And he carried away with him to Babylon all the princes and mighty men of valor of Jerusalem, even ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and the smiths; none remaining save the poorest sort of the people of the land.

And he carried away likewise Jehoiachin and his mother, and his wives and his officers, and all the chief men of the land; of the soldiers and smiths and craftsmen made he captive eight thousand, all of them strong and apt for war.

This was the beginning of the Captivity! Nebuchadnezzar appointed as king over the few inhabitants he had left in Judah a man connected with the royal house, called Zedekiah, but his rule was only a farce and a pretense, and in eleven years was brought to an end by another invasion. Zedekiah rebelled against his master, and Nebuchadnezzar hurried to Jerusalem, determined this time to wipe out forever the stubborn little kingdom that had dared defy him and his father for so many years. He and his army encamped against Jerusalem, and built forts against it round about, and carried on the siege for five months. And in the fourth month the famine was so great that there was no bread for the people. Then a breach was made in the wall, and all the men of war fled by night by the way of the gate between the two walls, which was by the king's garden, and Zedekiah took a different route by the way of Arabah. But the enemy heard that he had gone and pursued after him and overtook him in the plain of Jericho; and all his army was scattered from him. And they took Zedekiah and carried him to Riblah to the king of Babylon for judgment, and they slew his sons before his eyes, and put out his eyes, poor king, and bound him with fetters and carried him to Babylon a prisoner.

And now Jerusalem surrendered, and the king of Babylon appointed Nebuzaradan, his captain of the guard, to execute judgment on the unhappy city. He did his work well, for he slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old men or ancient. He burnt the

house of the Lord and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, even every great house burnt he with fire. And the army of the Chaldeans that was with Nebuzaradan brake down the walls round about the city; and the pillars of brass that were in the Temple and the basins and the molten (or brazen) sea did they break in pieces and carry the brass of them to Babylon, as well as the pots and the shovels and the snuffers and the spoons and all the vessels of brass wherewith they ministered. And they carried away also the firepans and basins; that which was of gold in gold, and that which was of silver in silver.

And the residue of the people that were left in the city did they carry away captive, but they left the poorest of the land to be vinedressers and husbandmen. Those who were considered important enough for captivity were carried to Riblah in the land of Hamath to be judged by Nebuchadnezzar himself, and were almost without exception put to death.

So Judah was carried away captive out of his land.

The Assyrians left a man called Gedaliah to be governor over the poor little handful of Jews left in Judah, and some of them submitted to his rule. The more bitter patriots, however, despised him and all those who submitted to the Babylonian yoke, and they ended by killing Gedaliah and all the Jews and Chaldeans that were with him at Mizpah, where he had established his capital. Then they themselves sought refuge in Egypt, the only place where they were safe from the vengeance of Assyria.

Here begins the famous Captivity of the Jews, which lasted for seventy years; and with it ends the story of the Children of Abraham, if we except the one tale of Daniel's adventures in the foreign land.

With the return of the Israelites to their own land history proper takes up the narrative, and gives us little

beside the bare facts to remember, though we owe to this period some of the sublimest literature the world has ever known. When you are older you will read the Books of the Prophets for yourselves, and I hope you will love them.

Some of the most beautiful psalms were written during the Captivity; written by a homesick people to cheer their souls in a foreign land. Ezekiel, too, wrote and prophesied with the same aim, and the last part of the book of Isaiah is supposed to have been written by some exile who modestly hid his identity under the name of the old prophet.

The Book of Ezra gives an account of the return of the Jews from Babylon, and Nehemiah tell us how they rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem, but they never again were a people of political importance. They were chosen for other work in the world.

Henceforth they lived contentedly under the rule of some governor appointed by whatever power wielded the authority in their corner of the earth, were it Egyptian, Babylonian, Greek or Roman.

We have gone over together the tales that have come down to us of the childhood of this singular people. If you care to follow out their life-work you will find yourselves involved in the history of every European nation, as well as many of those in Asia and Africa, and to know what became of them finally, you would have to wait for the end of the world.

FINIS